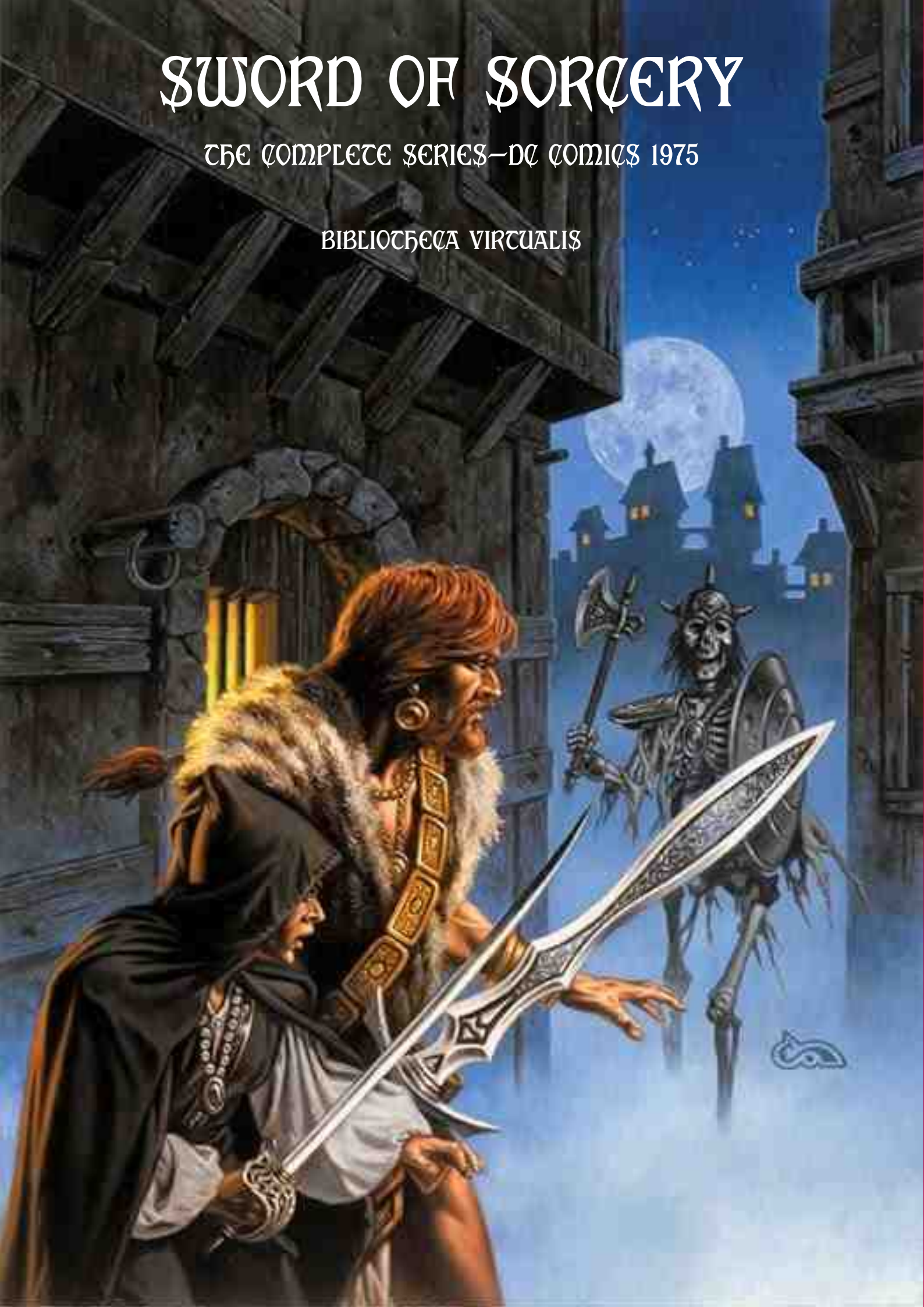
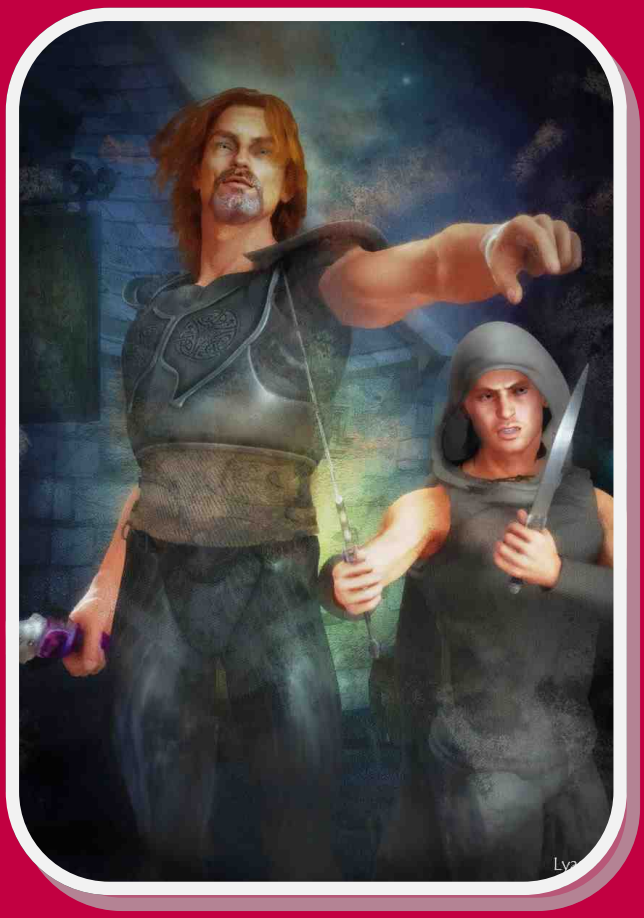
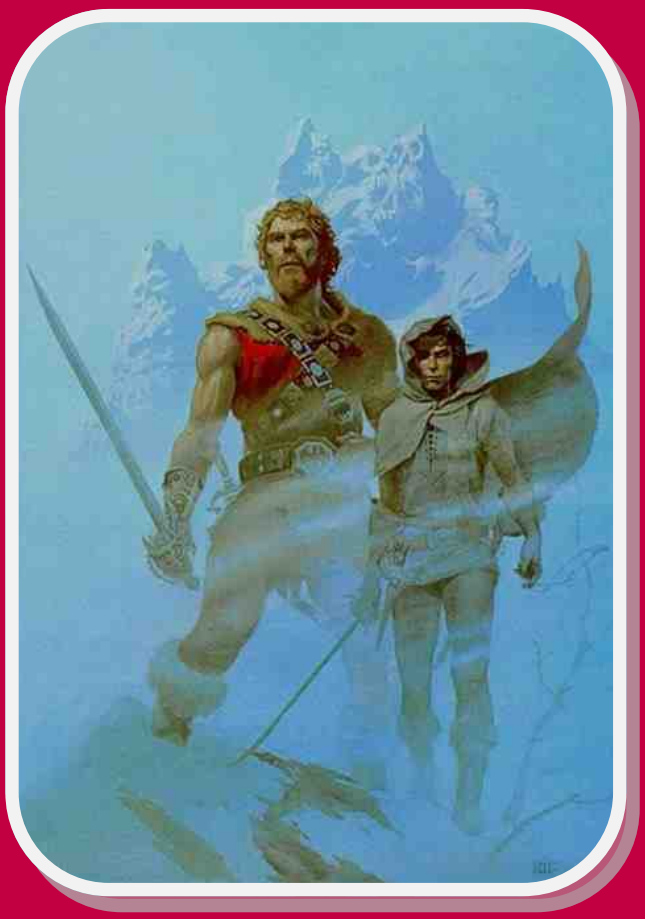
SWORD OF SORCERY

THE COMPLETE SERIES—DC COMICS 1975

BIBLIOTHECA VIRTUALIS



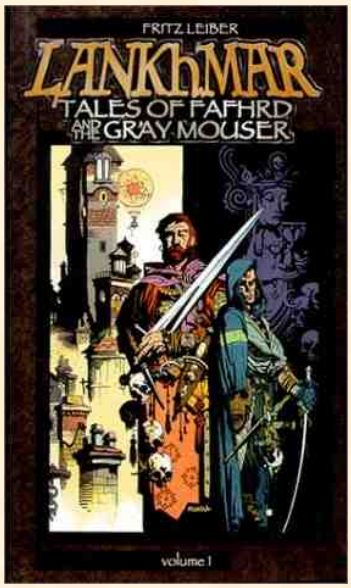




Sword of Sorcery est tiré d'une saga de nouvelles intitulée **Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser** que l'on connait en France sous le titre du *Cycle des épées*. Fafhrd est un géant de 2,1 mètres tandis que son compagnon ne mesure que 1,5 mètre d'où ce nom de souricier.

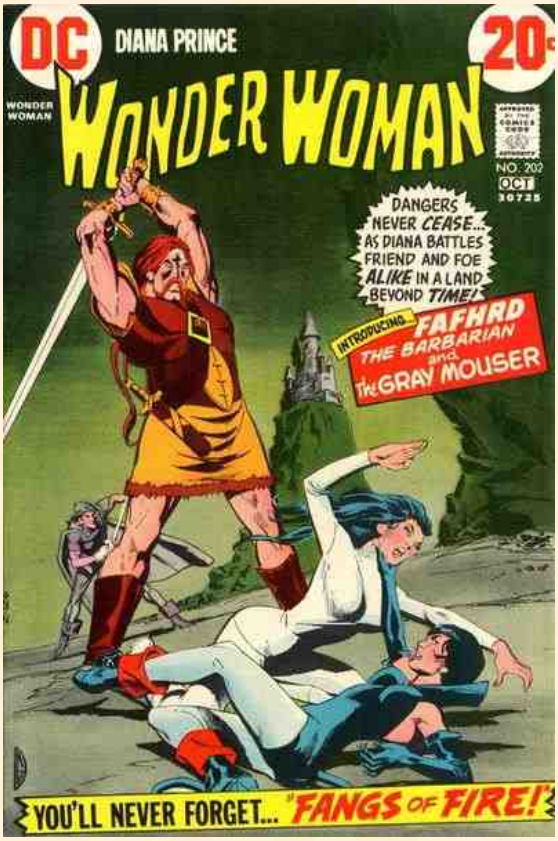
Nous sommes en 1934et Conan a fait, un peu, parler de lui au moins dans les pulps. Dans les années 20 existait un couple d'acteurs comiques scandinaves que 'lon a appelé en France Double-Pattes et Patachon. C'était au temps du muet , époque où il était relativement facile à une vedette étrangère de percer aux Etats-Unis. Le duo est connu là-bas sous le sobriquet de Ole and Axel. Ce Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser est donc né de la rencontre improbable du Cimmérien et de ces deux Scandinaves.

Or donc en 1934 Harry Otto Fisher (1910-1986) glisse cette idée à son copain Fritz Leiber (1910-1992). Celui-ci se met à écrire une première nouvelle en 1936, laquelle ne sera publiée qu'en 1939 tandis que la dernière des près de quarante ne le sera qu'en 1988, presque cinquante ans plus tard. C'est Fritz qui rédige mais en en discutant d'abord le plus souvent avec Harry, lequel est également un auteur de science-fiction.



Nehwon est le monde qu'ils ont créé et où vivent leurs deux personnages. Fafhrd est un escrimeur de première, tout comme d'ailleurs le Souricier Gris. À proprement parler ce n'est pas réellement du médiéval fantastique, par analogie nous serions plutôt dans cette zone qui n'est plus vraiment le Moyen-Âge mais réellement encore la Renaissance.

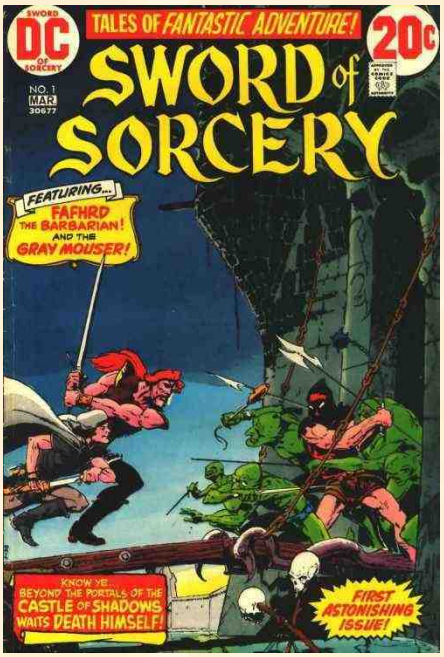
Si le duo n'est pas très connu en France, il a son lot de fidèles aux Etats-Unis et beaucoup voit en Fritz Leiber l'un des pères de l'*heroic fantasy*, il passe d'ailleurs pour être celui qui a forgé le terme '*sword and sorcery*'.



Quand la conanmania commence à prendre de l'ampleur, il va de soi que DC Comics se doit de répliquer face à son grand rival. Des réponses il y en aura plein mais Fafhrd est sans doute la première puisque le personnage apparait comme simple silhouette dans le #201 de *Wonder Woman* puis comme l'un des personnages de *Fangs of Fire* toujours avec la fameuse princesse dans le #202 présent dans bacs fin juillet 1972.

À la fin de cette même année est donc lancé *Sword of Sorcery* qui reprend les personnages de Leiber dans des aventures originales. C'est Dennis O'Neil (1939-2020) qui est chargé des scénarios. Après avoir fait ses classes chez Marvel, puis Charlton, O'Neil suit en 1968 Dick Giordano quand celui-ci est recruté par DC Comics.

Howard Chaykin (1950) est choisi pour s'occuper des dessins. *Sword of Sorcery* est d'ailleurs l'un de ses premiers travaux en tant que professionnel reconnu avec sa signature. Il avait débuté en tant qu'assistant de Gil Kane (1926-2000) qui venait de perdre son précédent assistant d'un arrêt cardiaque à seulement 23 ans. Il compléta ensuite sa formation chez Wallace Wood (1927-2001).



Déjà naturellement doué et avec en plus de tels professeurs, faut-il préciser qu'il a fait un sacré bout de chemin depuis ?

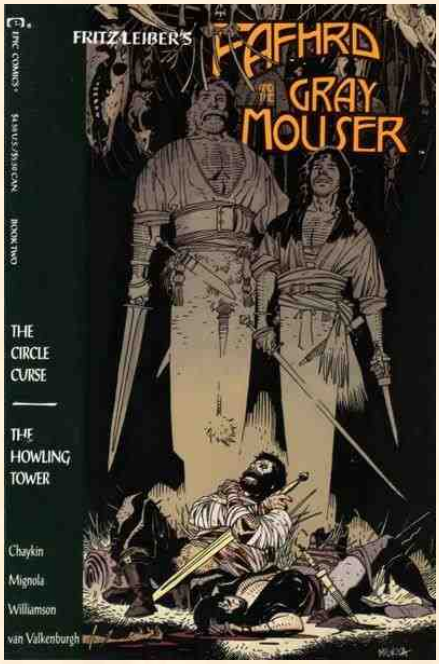
Davantage en tout cas que Fafhrd et le Souricier Gris puisque la série n'aura que cinq numéros d'où l'impression d'une rencontre qui n'a pas vraiment eu lieu.

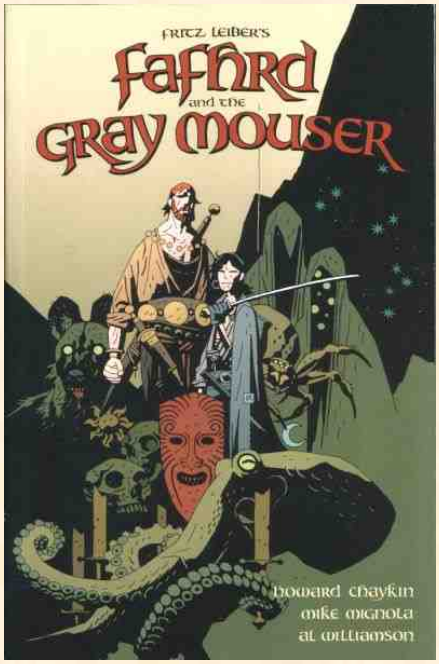
En 1990 Marvel repique au jeu pour une série encore plus courte de quatre numéros seulement. Les dessins étaient pourtant signés Mike Mignola et l'adaptation des nouvelles de Leiber était due à … Howard Chaykin justement. En 2007 Dark Horse publie en un seul volume les quatre numéros sortis chez Marvel presque vingt ans plus tôt. Enfin en 2016 l'éditeur fait rebelote avec les cinq numéros de DC Comics; soit plus de 40 ans après.

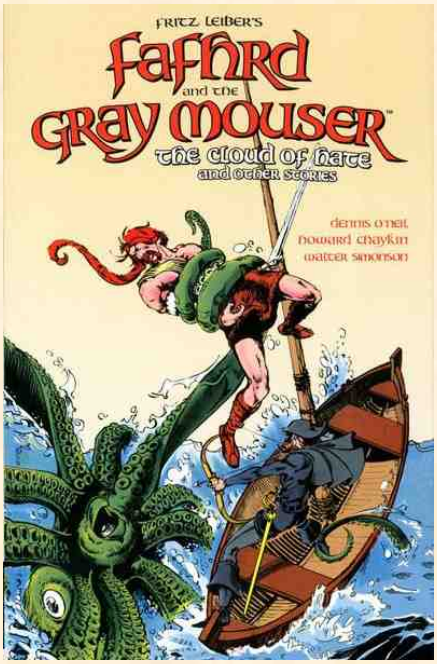
Depuis plus rien !

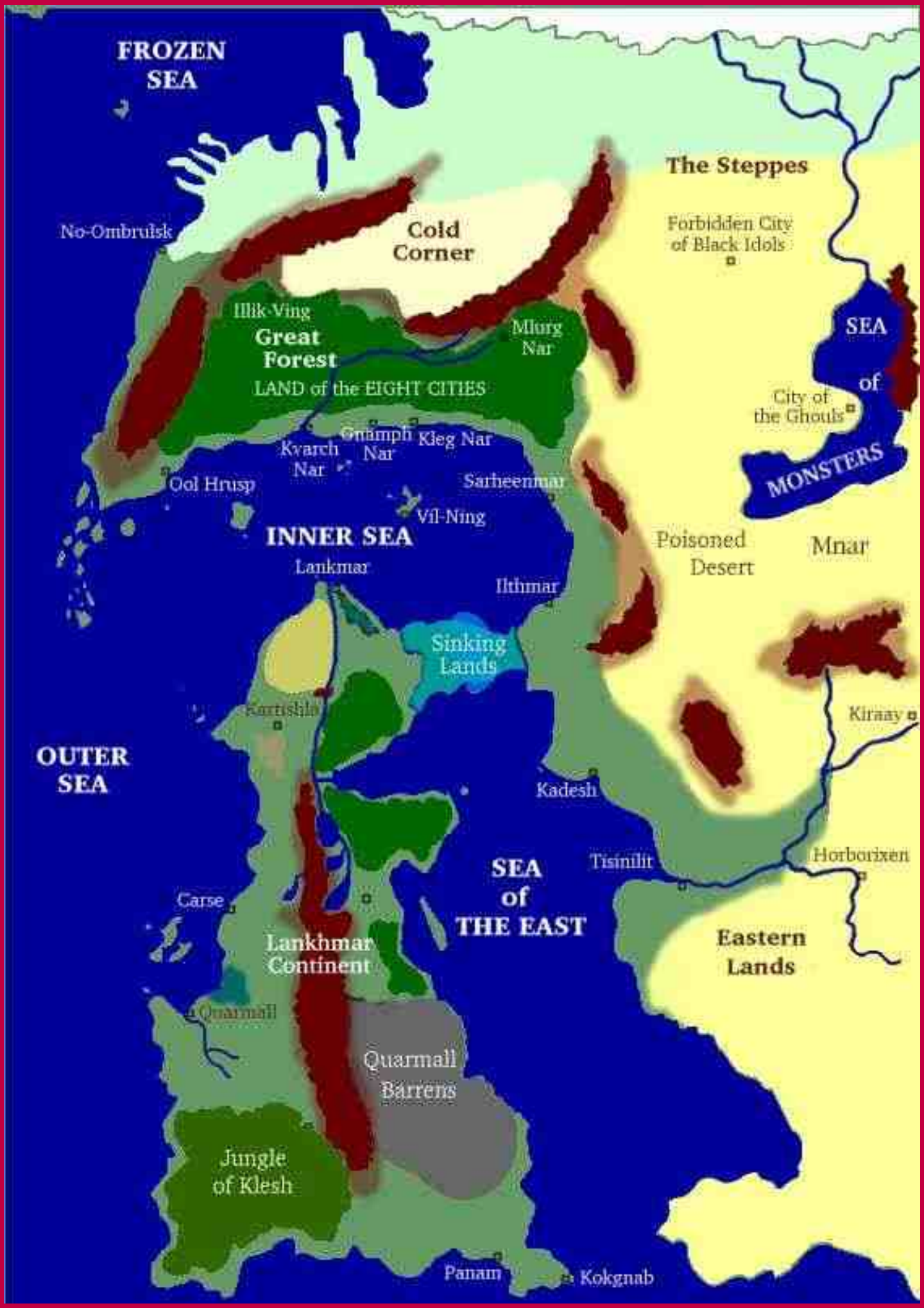
Voici de quoi vous faire une idée.

Garches, le 4 novembre 2022








FROZEN SEA
The Steppes
No-Ombrulsk
Cold Corner
Forbidden City of Black Idols
Illik-Ving
Great Forest
Mlurg Nar
SEA of MONSTERS
LAND of the EIGHT CITIES
City of the Ghouls
Gnamph Nar
Kleg Nar
Kvarch Nar
Ool Hrusp
Sarheenmar
Vil-Ning
INNER SEA
Poisoned Desert
Mnar
Lankmar
Ilthmar
Sinking Lands
Kiraay
OUTER SEA
Kadesh
Tisinilit
Horborixen
SEA of THE EAST
Carse
Lankhmar Continent
Eastern Lands
Quarmall
Quarmall Barrens
Jungle of Klesh
Panam
Kokgnab

SWORD OF SORCERY. Vol. 1, No. 1. Feb.-Mar.: 1973. Published bi-monthly by NATIONAL PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS, INC., 909 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022. Carmine Infantino, Publisher. Dennis O'Neil, Editor. Sol Harrison, Production Manager. Advertising Representative, Sanford Schwartz & Co., Inc., 16 West 46th Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. Copyright ©1972 by National Periodical Publications, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. No actual persons, living or dead, are intended or should be inferred. Printed in U.S.A.

SUBSCRIPTION DEPT.: P.O. Box 1037, Flushing, N.Y. 11352. Rates for fifteen 20c issues $3.00 in U.S. and Possessions; $4.00 elsewhere.

This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition, nor affixed to, nor as part of any advertising, literary or pictorial matter

YOU! BE YOU A MAN-- OR AN OVERLARGE OX?
DO YOU HEAR SOMETHING, MOUSER?
I DO! THE CHATTERING OF A BUG, PERHAPS!
FAFHRD--DID YOU KNOW BUGS COULD SPEAK?
I'M AN IGNORANT BARBARIAN; MOUSER! I ONLY KNOW THEY CAN BE SQUASHED!
EXCUSE US, LADIES! IT MAY BE WE'LL REJOIN YOU LATER!
--AFTER WE ATTEND TO A BIT OF SQUASHING!
LET'S BE AT IT, FRIEND!
INSOLENT PUP! IT'LL BE A PLEASURE TO EARN THE MONEY OFFERED FOR YOU!
--A SHORT-LIVED PLEASURE, I'D JUDGE--!
TRUE! MORE THAN ONE LIFE IS ABOUT TO BE SHORTENED!
UNLESS, OF COURSE, THESE OAFS CARE TO ADMIT DEFEAT!

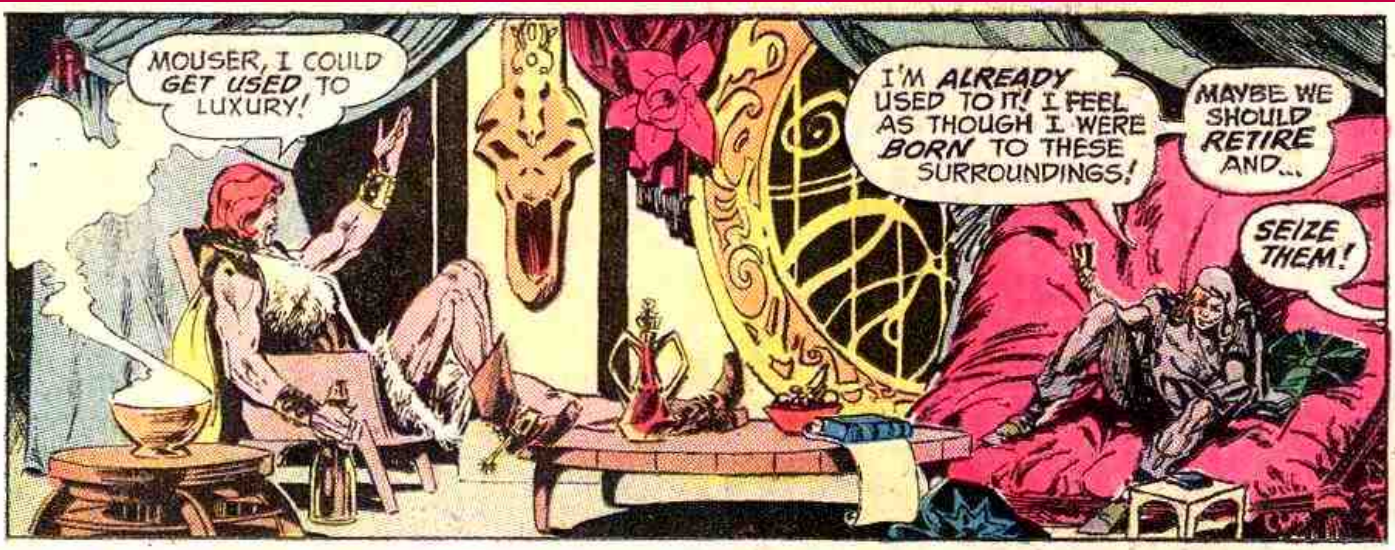
THEY'RE MORE SKILLED THAN WE'D HEARD!
LADS-- SOME HELP!
AND FOUR GRIM FORMS SWELL FROM THE SHADOWS...
A PIECE OF THE REWARD WILL BUY OUR AID!
LET'S FINISH 'EM QUICK--'FORE THE LAW ARRIVES!
AH, MOUSER...WE FIND OURSELVES OUTNUMBERED!
NOW ORDINARILY, I DON'T MIND ODDS OF THREE-TO-ONE!
I DON'T SUPPOSE YON SWORD-SWIPING INSECTS WOULD CONSIDER POSTPONING THE FIGHT TILL THE MORNING!
BUT THIS LONG AFTERNOON OF DRINKING AND SINGING HAS LEFT ME WEARY!
TIME FOR SOME CLEVERNESS...SOME TACTICS! CAN YOU HOLD OUR GROUND ALONE FOR A FEW MOMENTS?
AYE! JUST DON'T STOP FOR A DRINK ...OR A KISS!
MY BEST TACK IS SIMPLY TO BE WHERE THEIR STEEL ISN'T!
--AND TO PUT MY BOOT WHERE THEIR UGLY FACES ARE!
3

BARBARIAN! -- HAVE YOU TAKEN LEAVE OF YOUR WITS? THOSE BARRELS AREN'T YOUR ENEMIES!
SWEET CHILD, SUCH LOVABLE FELLOWS AS WE HAVE NO ENEMIES!
--AND TO PROVE IT, I'LL GIVE OUR PLAYMATES REFRESHMENT! --CUT LOOSE THE RESTRAINING BEAM--
--AND SEND THEM MANY GALLONS OF EXCELLENT WINE!
RRUMMBLE!
OH, DEAR... A MISTAKE! I SHOULD'VE TAKEN IT FROM THE BARRELS FIRST, EH?
WHOMMP!
AH, WELL... ONE CAN'T EXPECT A MERE BARBARIAN TO UNDERSTAND THE FINER POINTS OF GOOD MANNERS!
OUR LABORS APPEAR TO BE DONE --AS DONE AS THE FOOLS WHO CHALLENGED US!
A PITY THEY QUIT THE PARTY SO EARLY! --I'M HURT THEY CHOSE SLEEP OVER US!
I NEED THE COMFORT OF FEMALE COMPANIONSHIP! WHERE DID THE GIRLS GO?
HOWEVER, AT THAT INSTANT...
'TIS THOSE TWO! THEY WRECKED THE ROOM.. AND LAID SIX CUSTOMERS ON THE FLOOR!
--FOR WHICH THEY'LL PAY, WOMAN! STAND ASIDE!

I AM CHARGED WITH KEEPING THE PEACE IN OUR TOWN! I BID YOU SURRENDER!
--OR YOU'LL SIC THE LOCAL ARMY ON ME?
I DON'T OBJECT TO HUMBLING A FEW MANGY THIEVES -- BUT TO WHIP A TROOP WOULD BE MOST TIRING!
FAREWELL, MOUSER! I'LL MEET YOU AT THE USUAL SITE!
KREESH!
PRAY YOU EXCUSE MY CRUDE COMPANION! HE BLUNDERS THROUGH THE NEAREST WINDOW--
--WHILE I USE AN EXIT REQUIRING AGILITY TO REACH!
THUS ENABLING YOU TO ENJOY MY ACROBATICS!
NONE SAVE FAFHRD AND THE GRAY MOUSER ARE SO QUICK AND INSOLENT!
T'WAS SURELY THEM!
HOW NICE TO BE APPRECIATED!
MEANWHILE...
A POX UPON THE BARBARIAN! HE SAID WE'D MEET "AT THE USUAL SITE--"
--BUT WHICH USUAL SITE! WE HAVE DOZENS OF USUAL SITES!
I GUESSED CORRECTLY! FAFHRD GOES WHERE THE COMELY LADIES PASS!
'TIS NOT A BAD CHOICE! IN THE MARKETPLACE THE CROWDS ARE THICK ENOUGH TO HIDE IN!
HOWEVER, THE CHANCE OF BEING SET UPON BY FOES IS GREAT! AND FOES WE HAVE APLENTY IN THESE PARTS!

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

AS FOR THE LOCK...
...TIS A PUNY THING...
...SUCH SHODDY WORKMANSHIP IS A DISGRACE!
SNA-PUH!
A TRULY LUXURIOUS HALL! THE DUKE DENIES HIMSELF NOTHING IN THE WAY OF COMFORT!
WHAT'S GOOD FOR ROYALTY IS EQUALLY GOOD FOR US!
--A SPLENDID LIBRARY! FIRST EDITIONS OF ALL THE FORBIDDEN BOOKS OF THE GODS OF LANKHMAR!
I LOOK FORWARD TO MANY PLEASANT HOURS OF READING!
YOU HAVE YOUR PLEASURES... I HAVE MINE!



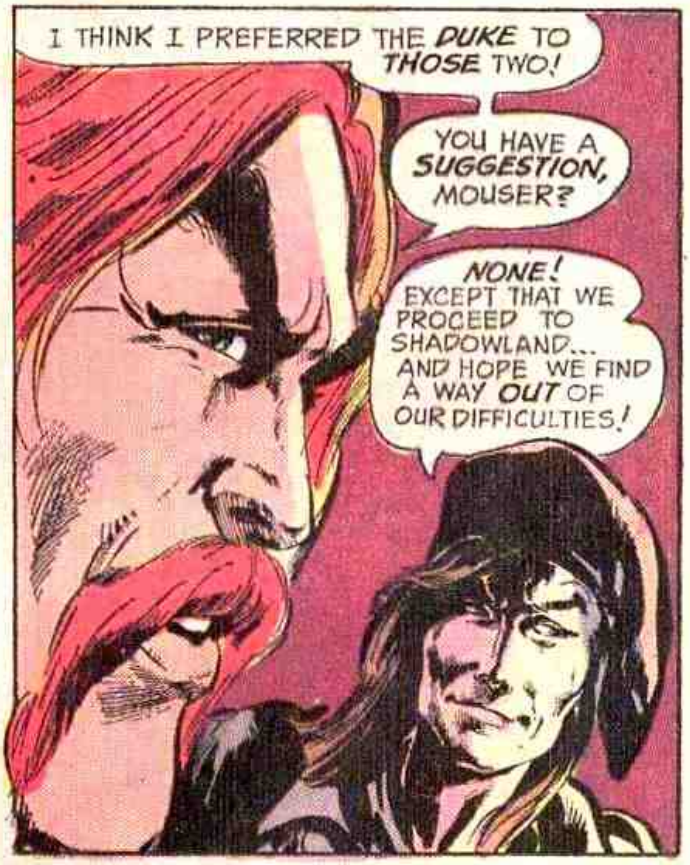
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

HOWEVER... BEFORE THE ARCHERS CAN SHOOT, THE AIR IN FRONT OF THE THE DOOMED PAIR SHIMMERS... GLISTENS AS THOUGH LIT BY A THOUSAND FIREFLIES...

--AND, MIRACULOUSLY...

WITH THE EASE OF NATURAL ATHLETES, THE BARBARIAN AND THE MOUSER SPRING TO THE EERIE ANIMAL'S BACK--
--GREAT AS THEIR JUMP DOUBTLESS IS, IT IS NOTHING TO THE NEXT--SPECTACULAR--LEAP...
D-DID WE REALLY SEE... THAT, YOUR GRACE?
OF COURSE NOT, DOLT!
ACROSS THE DESOLATE SALT MARSH AND SINKING LAND, THE MIGHTY UNICORN GALLOPS, TO THE MOUNTAINS BEYOND ITHMAR, CITY OF EVIL REPUTATION...
...UP A MOON-SILVERED HILL AND INTO A CAVE DARK BEYOND DREAMS OF NIGHT--!
10

INSIDE, THE STEEDS SUDDENLY VANISH, AND...
OWW! A PAINFUL END TO A SWIFT JOURNEY!
LESS PAINFUL THAN THE DUKE'S ARROWS, FAP! DON'T COMPLAIN!
I DON'T LIKE THIS CAVERN! IT STINKS OF SORCERY!
THERE IS A DISTINCTLY MAGICKY ODOR! UNLIMBER YOUR BROADSWORD GREYWAND AND I'LL FREE MY SLIM SCALPEL AND...
SILLY... SILLY MORTALS--
--PUT AWAY YOUR STUPID STICKERS! THEY ARE NOT NEEDED! FOR WE ARE THE WIZARDS WHO RESCUED YOU!
APPROACH, MORTALS--
I AM SHEELBA OF THE EYELESS FACE!
--AND I AM NINGAUBLE OF THE SEVEN EYES! WE HAVE A TASK FOR YOU!
BEYOND THE TOWERS OF ITHMAR IS THE SHADOWLAND! THERE LIES THE CASTLE OF THE DESTROYER-- DEATH!
IN DEATH'S CHAMBER IS A THRONE-- AND ONCE UPON THE THRONE... THE MASK OF DEATH!
I CHARGE YOU TO BRING IT TO ME--
YOU! THE MASK IS BY RIGHTS MINE!
NONSENSE! A PALTRY, AMATEUR WIZARD SUCH AS YOURSELF WOULD MISUSE IT!

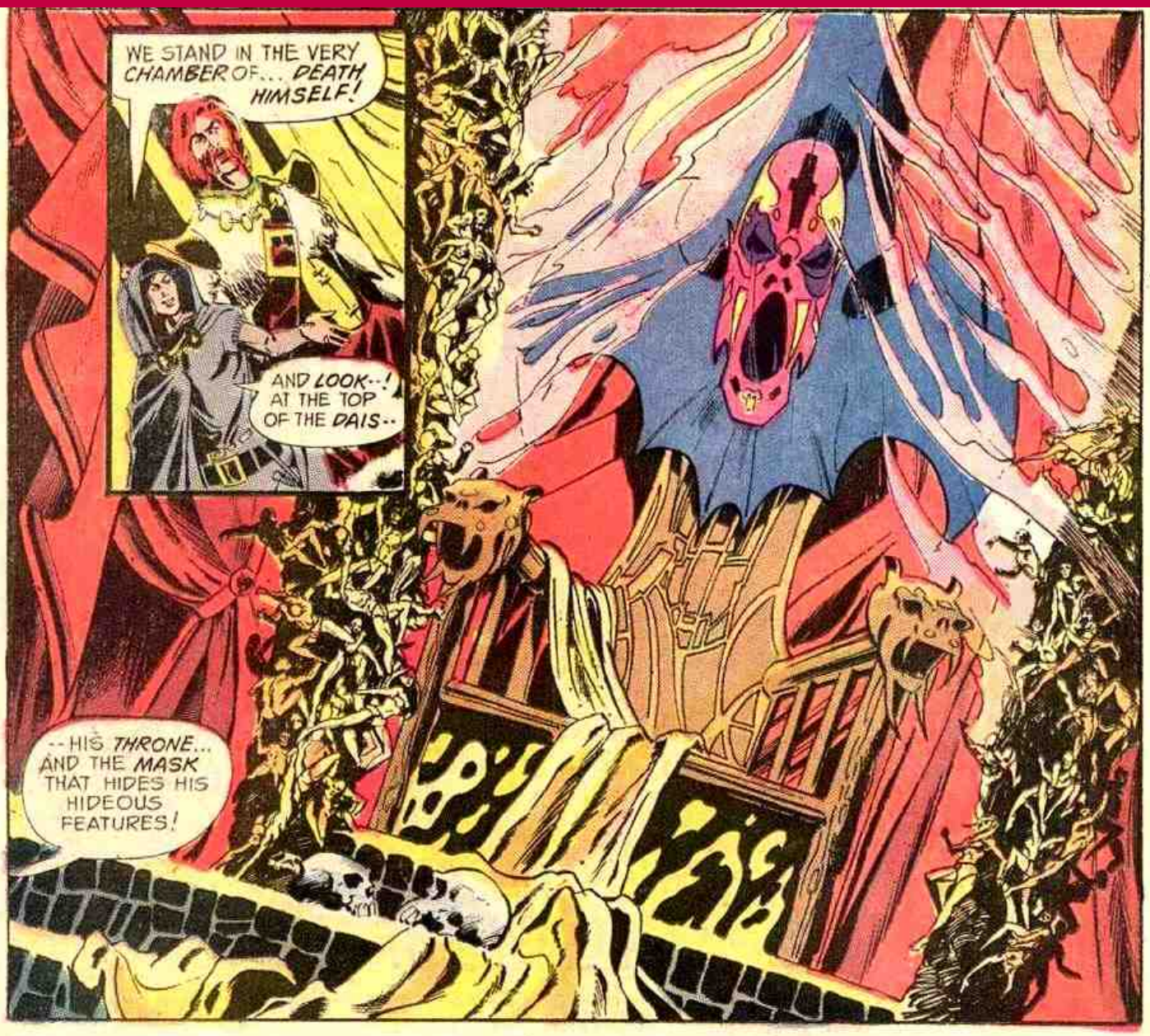


CONTINUED ON THE PAGE FOLLOWING

MEANWHILE, IN A NARROW STREET OF THAT STINKHOLE ITHMAR, CITY OF EVIL REPUTATION--
--DUKE DANIUS IS BARGAINING WITH A HOARSE-VOICED WITCH...
YOU DID AS I ASKED, OLD CRONE?
AYE, THOUGH IT WAS NOT EASY! MANY MOONS AND MUCH MAGIC IT TOOK--
--BUT I PLACED A SPELL ON THE WAR AXE! BE CERTAIN, DUKE... NOTHING CAN WITHSTAND IT NOW!
EXCELLENT! YOU PLEASE ME, CRONE!
THEN MAKE GOOD YOUR WORD! PAY ME THE THOUSAND PIECES OF SILVER YOU PROMISED!
YOU DEMAND PAYMENT, EH? VERY WELL -- MY MEN WILL GIVE YOU WHAT YOU DESERVE!
NO... NO! --MERCY!
TWANG!
AAAAAGH!
13

WHERE NOW, YOUR GRACE?
YOU GO NOWHERE, LOUT! AS FOR ME...
...FOR YEARS I HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO ENJOY THE SWEETNESS OF WINE... NOR THE GREATER SWEETNESS OF A COMELY WOMAN'S LIPS--
--FOR I LIVE IN CONSTANT FEAR THAT, SOON OR LATE, I WILL DIE--
SO--I GO TO SLAY DEATH HIMSELF!
HOURS LATER, AND MUCH FURTHER--
I TELL YOU, MOUSER-- I LIKE IT NOT! WE SHOULD BE SEEING THE RAYS OF DAWN--
--INSTEAD, WE RIDE INTO EVEN BLACKER NIGHT!
SEVERAL LEAGUES BACK, WE CROSSED THE BORDER OF SHADOWLAND! NO LIGHT OF THE SUN EVER PENETRATES THIS BLEAKNESS!
14

--SILVER HOOVES CLATTER ON A GRANITE BRIDGE AS THE UNICORNS BEAR THE SWORDSMEN TO A WIDE PORTAL...AND THE WAVERING FLAME--


WE STAND IN THE VERY CHAMBER OF... DEATH HIMSELF!
AND LOOK--! AT THE TOP OF THE DAIS--
--HIS THRONE... AND THE MASK THAT HIDES HIS HIDEOUS FEATURES!

IS HE ASLEEP? ON VACATION, MAY IT BE?
I DON'T KNOW... AND I HOPE I DON'T LEARN!
MY ONLY WISH IS TO STEAL THE MASK AND RETURN TO SHEELBA WITH GREATEST HASTE!

SORRY, MOUSER! I'VE VOWED TO TAKE IT TO NINGAUBLE--AND A BARBARIAN NEVER BREAKS A VOW!
HAVE YOU A COMPROMISE?
NO, FRIEND... NONE! OFTEN WE HAVE WONDERED WHICH OF US IS THE BETTER FIGHTER!
THE TIME HAS COME TO FIND OUT!
16

OH... GOOD, SMALL COMPANION! YOU'RE QUICK AS YOUR NAMESAKE-- THE CAT! YOU NEARLY SKEWERED ME!
FROM SUCH A SWORDSMAN AS YOURSELF, FAFHRD--
--THAT COMPLIMENT IS HIGH PRAISE INDEED!-- MY THANKS!
DON'T MENTION IT!
HOW LONG HAVE WE RIDDEN TOGETHER, MOUSER?
IT'S THESE TWO LONG YEARS, ISN'T IT, FAF? WE'VE OUT-WITTED KINGS, OUTFOUGHT SOLDIERS--
--AND LIFTED MANY A GOLD PIECE FROM THE POCKETS OF THIEVES!
NOT TO MENTION THE FAIR LADIES WE'VE AMUSED! AH... I'LL MISS YOU!
AND I YOU! I OFFER A PROMISE--
--YOU'LL HAVE THE BEST BURIAL THAT CAN BE BOUGHT... NO MATTER HOW MUCH I HAVE TO STEAL TO PAY FOR IT!
YOURS IS TRULY A GENEROUS HEART! HOWEVER, MAY I REFUSE YOUR KIND-NESS?
17

THERE'S WINE YET TO BE TASTED... AND SOFT HANDS TO HOLD! I'VE NO DESIRE TO LIE BENEATH THE DIRT.

...THOUGH THE DRINK AND THE GIRLS WILL BE LESS SWEET WITH YOU GONE...

...AHHHGH! FACE IT, MOUSER--- WE'VE NO BUSINESS KILLING EACH OTHER! THERE MUST BE A BETTER WAY!

SHUNK!
SUDDENLY... A HEAVY, DARK-GLIMMERING OBJECT BITES THE SPACE BETWEEN THEM, HALVING EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH--

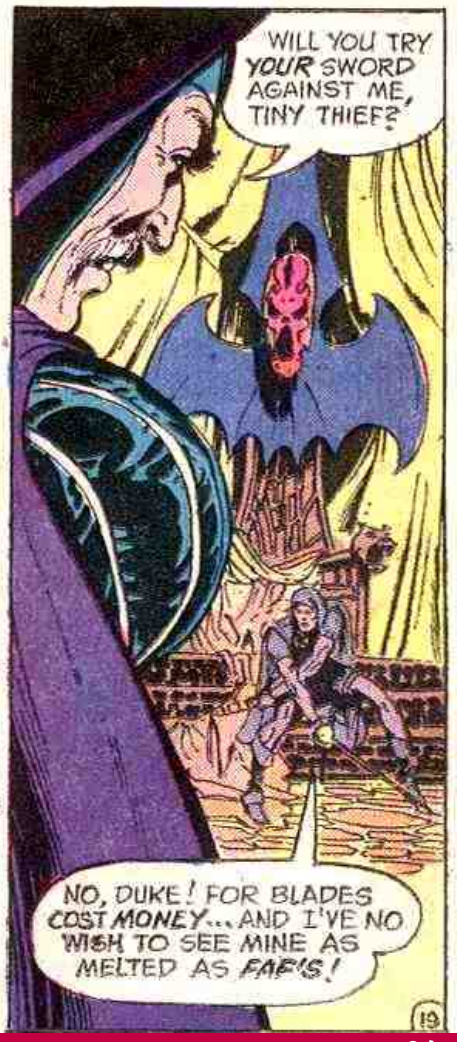
SO INTENT WERE YOU ON YOUR GAME YOU DID NOT SEE ME APPROACHING!
HAVE YOU COME TO PAY A SOCIAL VISIT?
DUKE DANIUS!
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

I'VE COME ON A MISSION OF MURDER! SINCE MY QUARRY ISN'T PRESENT, I SHALL PRACTICE -- ON YOU!
I DO BELIEVE WE'VE BEEN CHALLENGED, MOUSER!
WE'RE TWO-TO-ONE! NOT FAIR..! YOU MAY ATTEND TO HIM, FAF!

I'LL REST EASY AND WATCH!
DON'T GET TOO COMFORTABLE! THE MATTER WILL TAKE BUT A SECOND!
YOU'RE CONFIDENT, BARBARIAN--

AS FAFHRD'S BROADSWORD TOUCHES THE ENCHANTED AXE, A NIGHT-COLORED AURA SPRINGS INTO BEING ...AND SURROUNDS THE BARBARIAN ...AND RACKS HIM WITH AGONY...
CONFIDENT-- AND STUPID!

... HIS BLADE WILTS... AND HE DROPS TO THE CHILL STONES UNCONSCIOUS!


WILL YOU TRY YOUR SWORD AGAINST ME, TINY THIEF?
NO, DUKE! FOR BLADES COST MONEY... AND I'VE NO WISH TO SEE MINE AS MELTED AS FAF'S!
19

NO, SLIMY NOBLEMAN... I PREFER TO ABANDON MY STICKER!
I EXPECTED BETTER! --CAN'T YOU AT LEAST PUT UP A TOKEN STRUGGLE BEFORE SURRENDERING?

DID I MENTION SURRENDER? YOU MISUNDERSTAND--

NO REAL CAT WAS EVER SO SWIFT! NO EYE COULD FOLLOW THE MOUSER'S FINGERS AS THEY FREE THE KNIFE AND FLING IT--
--I MEAN TO REVENGE THE WRONG DONE TO FAF WITH CAT'S CLAW-- MY DAGGER!

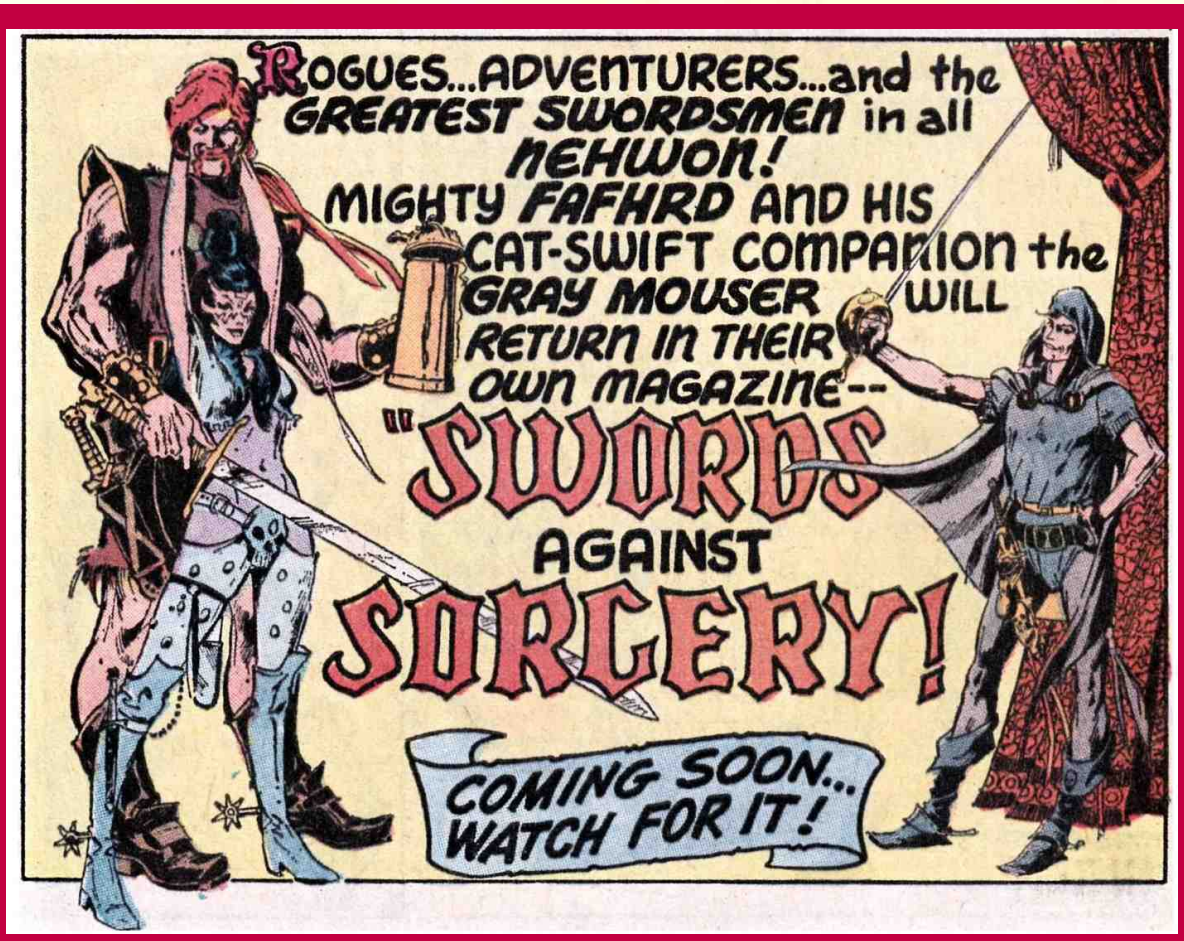
--BUT TO NO AVAIL!
SEE! MY MAGIC STOPS YOUR TOY... HOLD IT STILL IN THE AIR...

...AND SENDS IT WINGING BACK!
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

NOKK!
BOTH FALLEN! SLEEPING THEIR LAST SLEEP--
--MY AXE WILL SUP ON THEIR BLOOD!
IN MID-SWING, THE DUKE STOPS... FOR HE HEARS A DISTANT SOUND! IS IT THE WHISPER OF BATS?-- THE SCRAPE OF LIZARD'S TEETH ON STONE? NO... A THING FAR MORE DREADFUL--
...A STINK OF DECAY FILLS HIS NOSTRILS... AND THE BREATH OF WINTER PASSES INTO THE CHAMBER, COLD AND MERCILESS...! IN THE ARCHWAY, A SHADOWY FIGURE MATERIALIZES...
...FROM THE DUKE'S THROAT, WORDS ARE RIPPED--
DEATH! HE HAS RETURNED!
WITH EVERY IOTA OF MUSCLE HE POSSESSES, THE DUKE ATTACKS--
WHY DO I WORRY? I HAVE THE MEANS TO SLAY HIM... MY ENCHANTED AXE!

--WITH NO MORE EFFECT THAN A SNOWFLAKE FALLING ON HOT IRON!
I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN! THE WITCH LIED! NO SPELL IS POWERFUL ENOUGH TO BEST... YOU!
M-MERCY...
PLEASE... PLEASE...
A GASP... A RATTLE... AND HORRIBLE SILENCE...
MEANWHILE... THE SMALL SWORDSMAN HAS RECOVERED--AND HAS RUSHED TO HIS BURLY FELLOW...
HISST! FAF! WAKE UP! DANIUS AND DEATH ARE OCCUPIED! IT IS AN EXCELLENT MOMENT TO DEPART!

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE ON OR ABOUT FEB. 22ND



SWORD OF SORCERY. Vol. 1, No. 2. Apr.-May, 1973. Published bi-monthly by NATIONAL PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS, INC., 909 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022. Carmine Infantino, Publisher. Dennis O'Neil, Editor. Sol Harrison, Production Manager. Advertising Representative, Sanford Schwarz & Co., Inc., 16 West 46th Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. Copyright ©1973 by National Periodical Publications, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. No actual persons, living or dead, are intended or should be inferred. Printed in U.S.A.

SUBSCRIPTION DEPT.: P.O. Box 1047, Flushing, N.Y. 11352. Rates for fifteen 20c issues $3.00 in U.S. and Possessions; $4.00 elsewhere.

This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition, nor affixed to, nor as part of any advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever.

IN THAT CASE--
-- I SUPPOSE I HAVE NO CHOICE--
THAT
--BUT TO SLAY THE CREATURE!
YOU WASTED YOUR ENERGY, FAFHRD!--FOR BEHOLD... THE LOCK IS OPEN!
NO MATTER! ONE BEAST LESS WILL MAKE SMALL DIFFERENCE TO THE WORLD!
--GREAT RICHES AWAIT US WITHIN!
THEY'D BETTER... OR YOU'LL BE FOOD FOR CROWS!
STOP BABBLING AND HURRY--
AYE, FAT FISSIF! YOU BROUGHT US TO THIS UGLY PLACE WITH PROMISE OF TREASURE!
2

AND HERE IT IS!-- IN THE CHEST...
THEN LIFT THE LID, LARD-BELLY!
--THE SKULL OF OHMPHAL!... RUBIES FOR EYES... TEETH OF PURE DIAMOND... --AND THE HANDS--
--THOSE PEARL FINGERNAILS WOULD BY THEMSELVES RANSOM A KING!
I ADMIT TO BEING IMPRESSED!
IT APPEARS WE MISJUDGED YOU, FISSIF!
LET US DRINK A TOAST TO OUR GOOD FORTUNE!
I GENERALLY DO!
YOU FIRST, BARBARIAN!--AND I HOPE YOU FIND THE WINE TO YOUR LIKING!
UMMM... A BIT BITTER ON THE TONGUE!
DON'T SWALLOW IT ALL, FAF! I, TOO, AM THIRSTY!
3

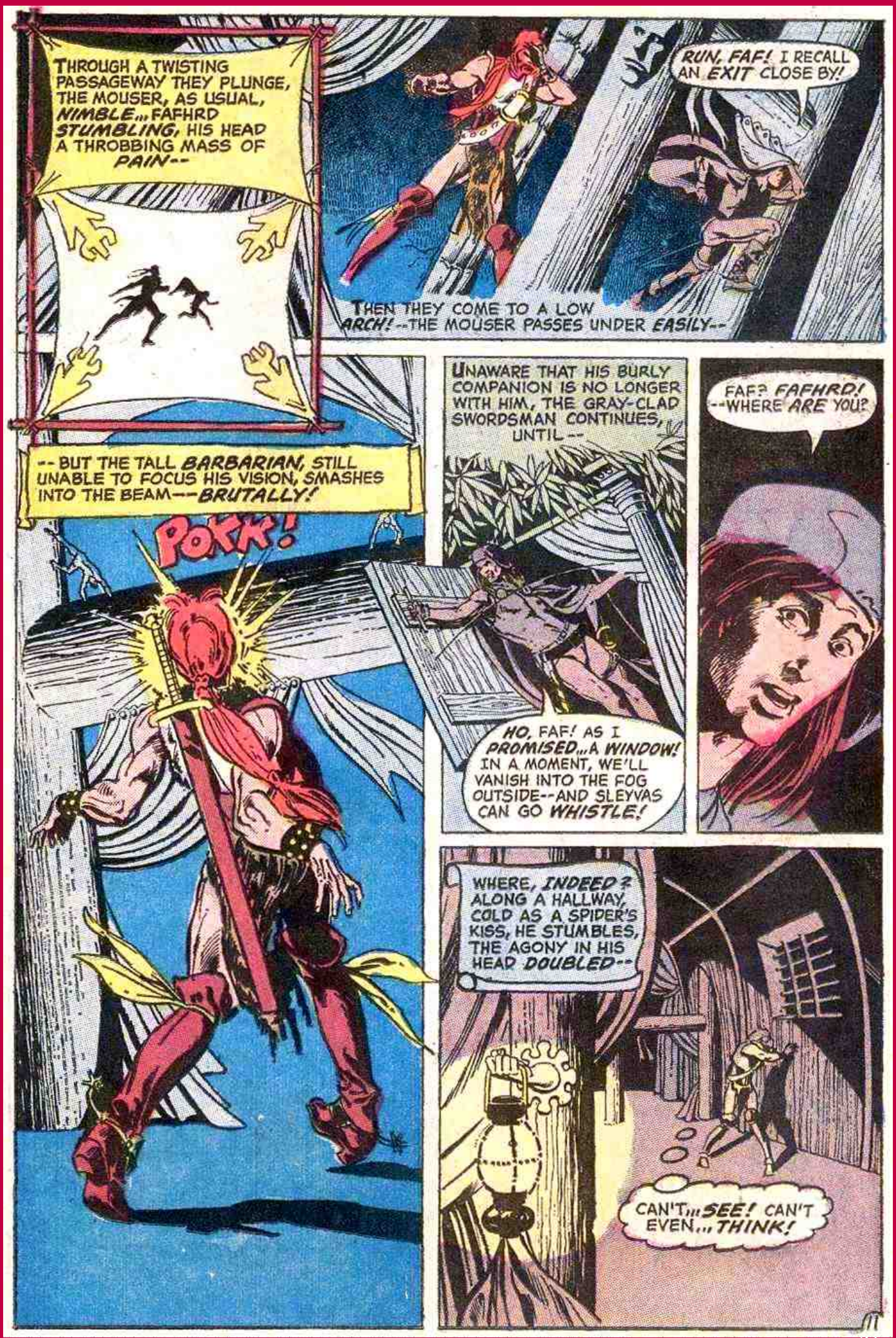
SUDDENLY I'M...DIZZY...
MOUSER! WE'VE BEEN TRICKED--
--THE WINE IS... DRUGGED...
SLEEP WELL-- FOOLS!
TIME PASSES...TO A NIGHT WHEN CHILL FOG HUGS STONY LANKHMAR LIKE A DARK SHROUD! IN ONE STREET RATHER NARROWER AND MORE SILENT THAN THE REST--CHEAP STREET BY NAME--A SINGLE YELLOW LIGHT SHINES...
...SHINES FROM THE DOORWAY OF THE THIEVES' HOUSE UPON TWO FAMILIAR FIGURES...
I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THIS, GRAY MOUSER!
TCHA! WE'RE NOT LETTING THAT DOUBLE-DEALING FISSIF ESCAPE AFTER CHEATING US!
TRUE, FISSIF'S ESCAPING DISPLEASES ME! BUT PUTTING MY NECK IN A TRAP DISPLEASES ME MORE!
YOU YOURSELF HAVE ENTERED THE HOUSE TWICE BEFORE AND ESCAPED! COME ON!
4

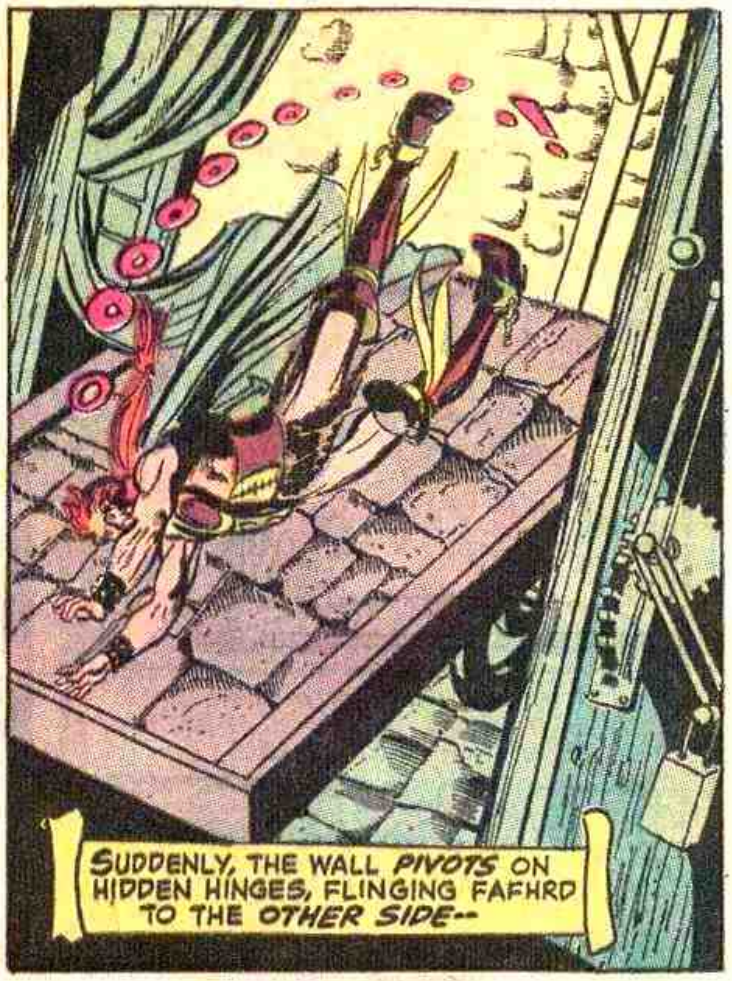
IT APPEARS THE GUARDS ARE NAPPING!
MOUSER... HAVE A CARE--
AT LEAST ONE GUARD IS AWAKE--
--OR WAS!
BY THE GODS! THEY DROP FROM THE CEILING THESE DAYS!
AYE! --AND ALSO RISE FROM THE FLOOR! STEP ASIDE, FAF--
--SO MY GOOD SWORD SCAPEL CAN DEAL WITH AN ASSASSIN'S BLADE!
DO YOU SUPPOSE I HURT HIM, FAF?
INDEED! THAT-- OR HE PRACTICES HIS SINGING!
YEOWWW!
5

THERE'S A FELLOW CAN SAY WHERE SHE WENT-- AND HOW WE CAN FOLLOW! --THE LEADER OF THIEVES!
HE'LL TALK OR I'LL WRING HIS NECK--
I'M AFRAID SOMEONE'S BEATEN YOU TO IT--
--SOMEONE OR SOMETHING HAS STRANGLED HIM!
KLESH!
BY THE GODS! THE MARKS ON HIS THROAT... I'D SWEAR THEY WEREN'T MADE BY ANYTHING HUMAN!
THEY APPEAR TO BE CLAW TRACKS... OR THE MARKS OF GRASPING BONES, IF SUCH THINGS CAN BE!
AND SEE HERE--
--PEARLS FROM THE HANDS WE STOLE! HE MUST HAVE PRIED SEVERAL LOOSE BEFORE HE DIED...
SHHHH--! THE GUARDS APPROACH! --UNDOUBTEDLY CHASING US!
QUICK, SMALL FRIEND-- BEHIND THE DRAPES!
I'M ALREADY THERE!
7

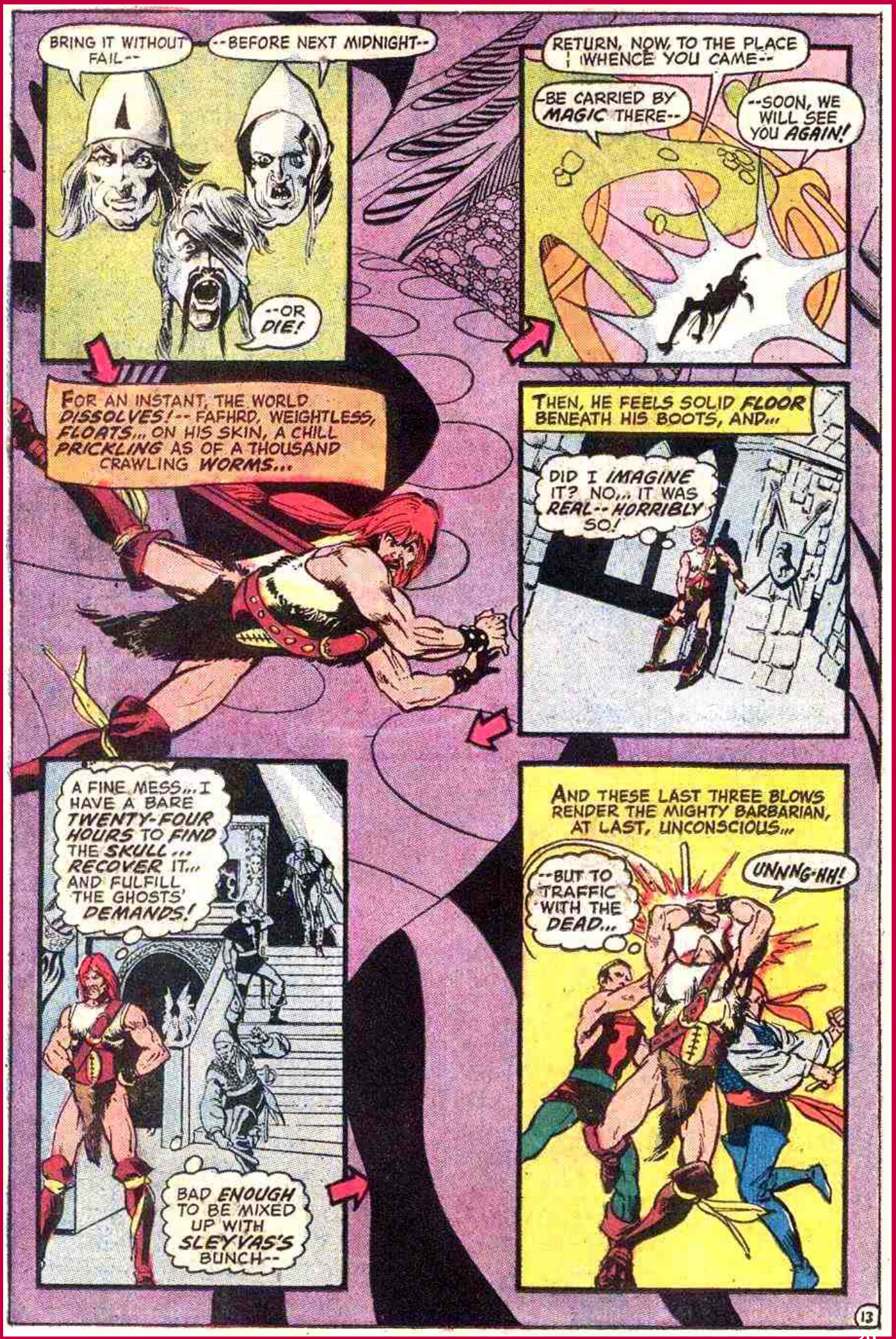
WHOEVER IS THERE--AND I CAN GUESS THEIR IDENTITIES--
--HACK THEM TO DOG MEAT!
I KNEW THE LARGENESS OF YOUR FEET WOULD GET US IN TROUBLE ONE DAY, FAF!
AYE! AS MY MOTHER FREQUENTLY SAID, I'D BE A FOOT TALLER, WERE NOT SO MUCH OF ME TUCKED BENEATH--!
IT MATTERS NOT! THESE CLUMSY OAFS CAN CAUSE US NO DIFFICULTIES!
KLUNK!
AM I ALSO AN OAF, BARBARIAN?
NO SLEYVAS! YOU ARE A THIEF--AND MORE! YOU ARE A TRULY EVIL MAN!
SKHK!
--AND I DO THE WORLD A SERVICE IN DISPATCHING YOU!
I CAN HELP, MASTER SLEYVAS!
BUT YOU DO NOT DISPATCH ME--NOT WHILE YOU SWING YOUR BROAD SWORD AS AN OLD WOMAN SWINGS A RUG-BEATER!
9

B-ONG!
FAF--BEHIND YOU!
HOWEVER... THE GRAY MOUSER'S WARNING IS SHOUTED TOO LATE--
IF I WEREN'T IN A HURRY, FAT FISSIF--I'D DO MORE THAN KICK! I'D DANCE ON YOUR MUSHY MOUTH--FOR HOURS!
FAFHRD IS IN DANGER! THE KNOCK ON THE HEAD DAZED HIM! BEFORE LONG, SLEYVAS'S POINT WILL FIND HIS HEART!
--UNLESS I INTERFERE!
HERE, SLIMY SLEYVAS--CATCH!
HURRY, FAFHRD!--BEFORE LONG, WE'LL HAVE AN ARMY OF CUTTHROATS CLIMBING OUR BACKS!
EH... WHERE DO WE GO...?
10


THROUGH A TWISTING PASSAGEWAY THEY PLUNGE, THE MOUSER, AS USUAL, NIMBLE... FAFHRD STUMBLING, HIS HEAD A THROBBING MASS OF PAIN--
RUN, FAF! I RECALL AN EXIT CLOSE BY!
THEN THEY COME TO A LOW ARCH! --THE MOUSER PASSES UNDER EASILY--
UNAWARE THAT HIS BURLY COMPANION IS NO LONGER WITH HIM, THE GRAY-CLAD SWORDSMAN CONTINUES, UNTIL --
FAF? FAFHRD! --WHERE ARE YOU?
HO, FAF! AS I PROMISED... A WINDOW! IN A MOMENT, WE'LL VANISH INTO THE FOG OUTSIDE--AND SLEYVAS CAN GO WHISTLE!
-- BUT THE TALL BARBARIAN, STILL UNABLE TO FOCUS HIS VISION, SMASHES INTO THE BEAM--BRUTALLY!
POKK!
WHERE, INDEED? ALONG A HALLWAY, COLD AS A SPIDER'S KISS, HE STUMBLES, THE AGONY IN HIS HEAD DOUBLED--
CAN'T... SEE! CAN'T EVEN... THINK!



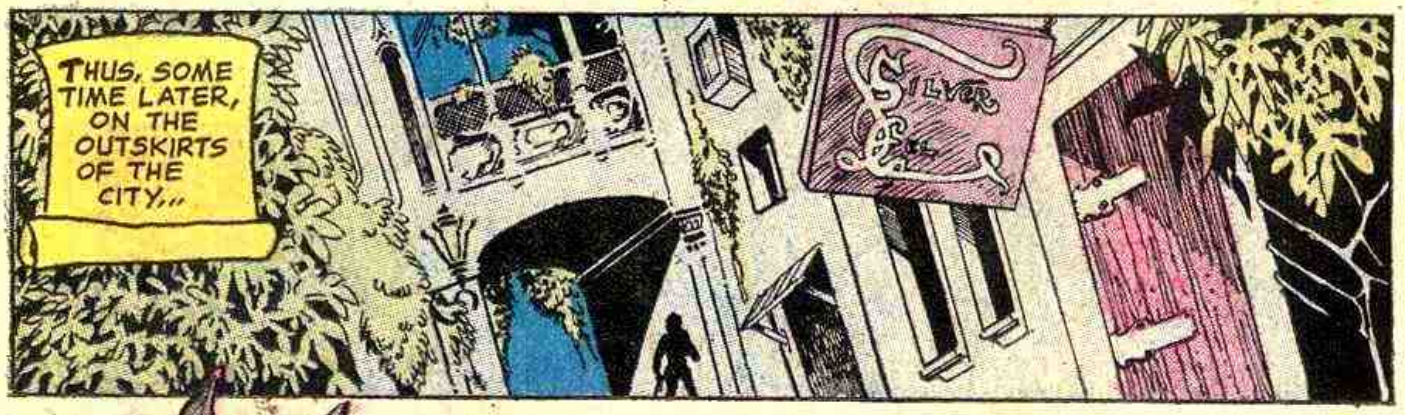
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING


BRING IT WITHOUT FAIL--
--BEFORE NEXT MIDNIGHT--
--OR DIE!
RETURN, NOW, TO THE PLACE WHENCE YOU CAME--
--BE CARRIED BY MAGIC THERE--
--SOON, WE WILL SEE YOU AGAIN!
FOR AN INSTANT, THE WORLD DISSOLVES! -- FAFHRD, WEIGHTLESS, FLOATS... ON HIS SKIN, A CHILL PRICKLING AS OF A THOUSAND CRAWLING WORMS...
THEN, HE FEELS SOLID FLOOR BENEATH HIS BOOTS, AND...
DID I IMAGINE IT? NO... IT WAS REAL -- HORRIBLY SO!
A FINE MESS... I HAVE A BARE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS TO FIND THE SKULL... RECOVER IT... AND FULFILL THE GHOSTS' DEMANDS!
BAD ENOUGH TO BE MIXED UP WITH SLEYVAS'S BUNCH--
AND THESE LAST THREE BLOWS RENDER THE MIGHTY BARBARIAN, AT LAST, UNCONSCIOUS...
--BUT TO TRAFFIC WITH THE DEAD...
UNNNG-HH!
13

EXCELLENT WORK, MY HEARTIES! I ONLY HOPE YOU DIDN'T KILL HIM!
HE IS BREATHING --BUT WE SURELY RATTLED SUCH BRAINS AS HE HAS!
MASTER SLEYVAS--

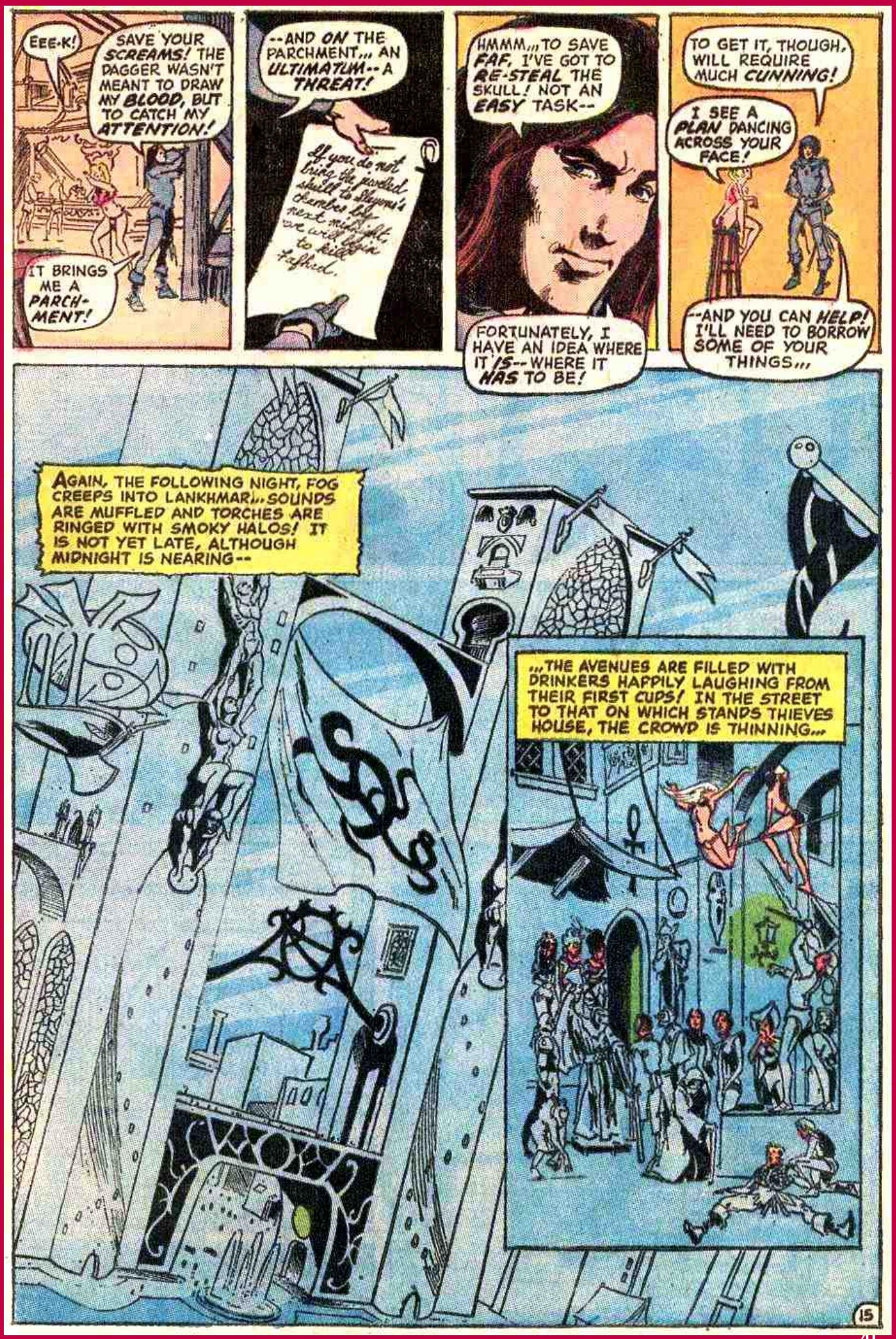
--WE HAVE FOUND THE GRAY MOUSER! HE SITS IN A TAVERN--THE SILVER EEL INN!
HAS HE THE SKULL WITH HIM?
APPARENTLY NOT, MASTER!

THEN I SHALL WRITE HIM A MESSAGE! SEE THAT HE GETS IT IMMEDIATELY!
AS YOU COMMAND!

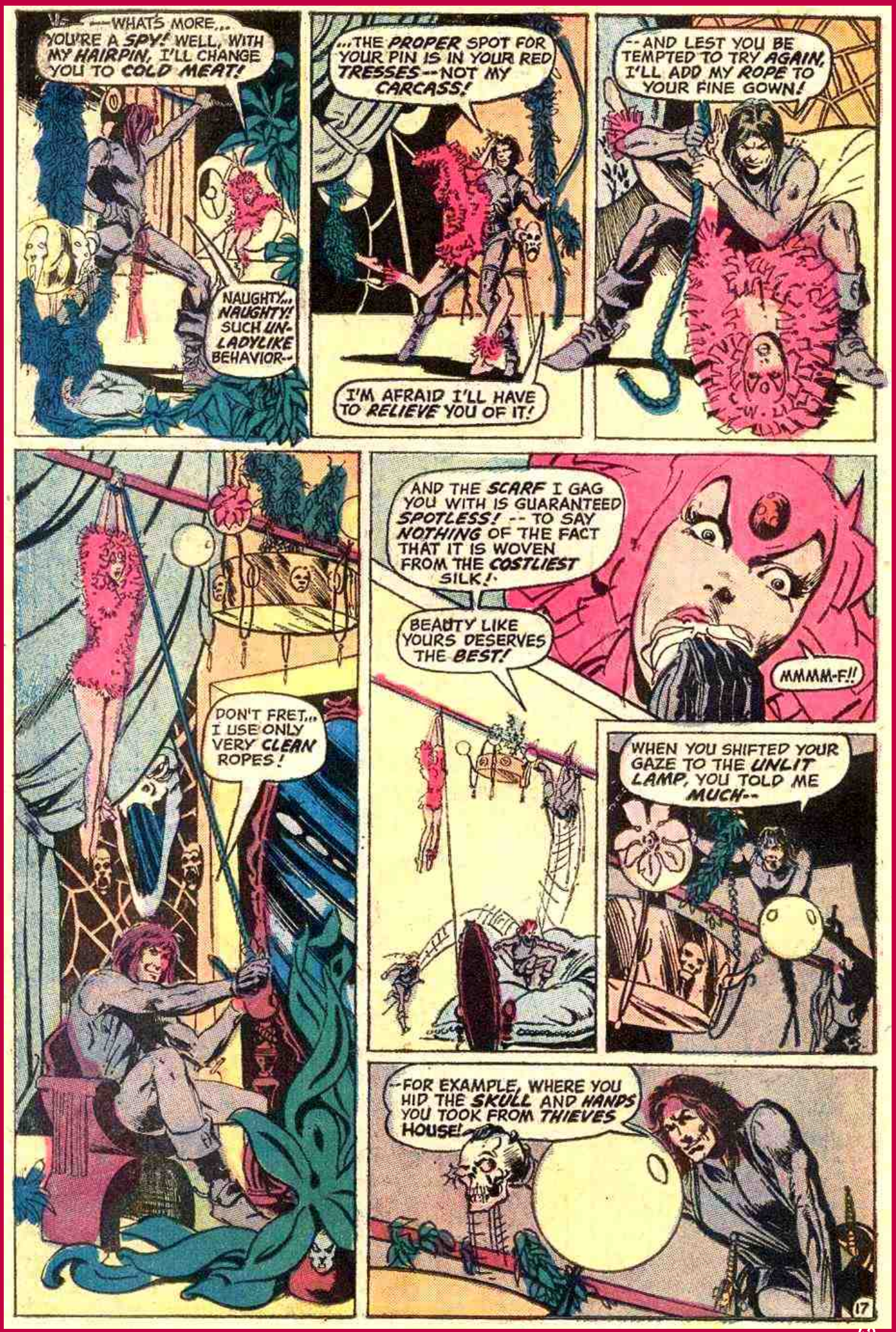

THUS, SOME TIME LATER, ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY...
SILVER EEL

YOU HAVE YET TO LAUGH THIS NIGHT! ARE YOU TROUBLED, SMALL ONE?
I AM DISTURBED! I WORRY ABOUT A FRIEND! HE SHOULD HAVE MET ME HOURS AGO!
I PRAY FOR A MESSAGE!

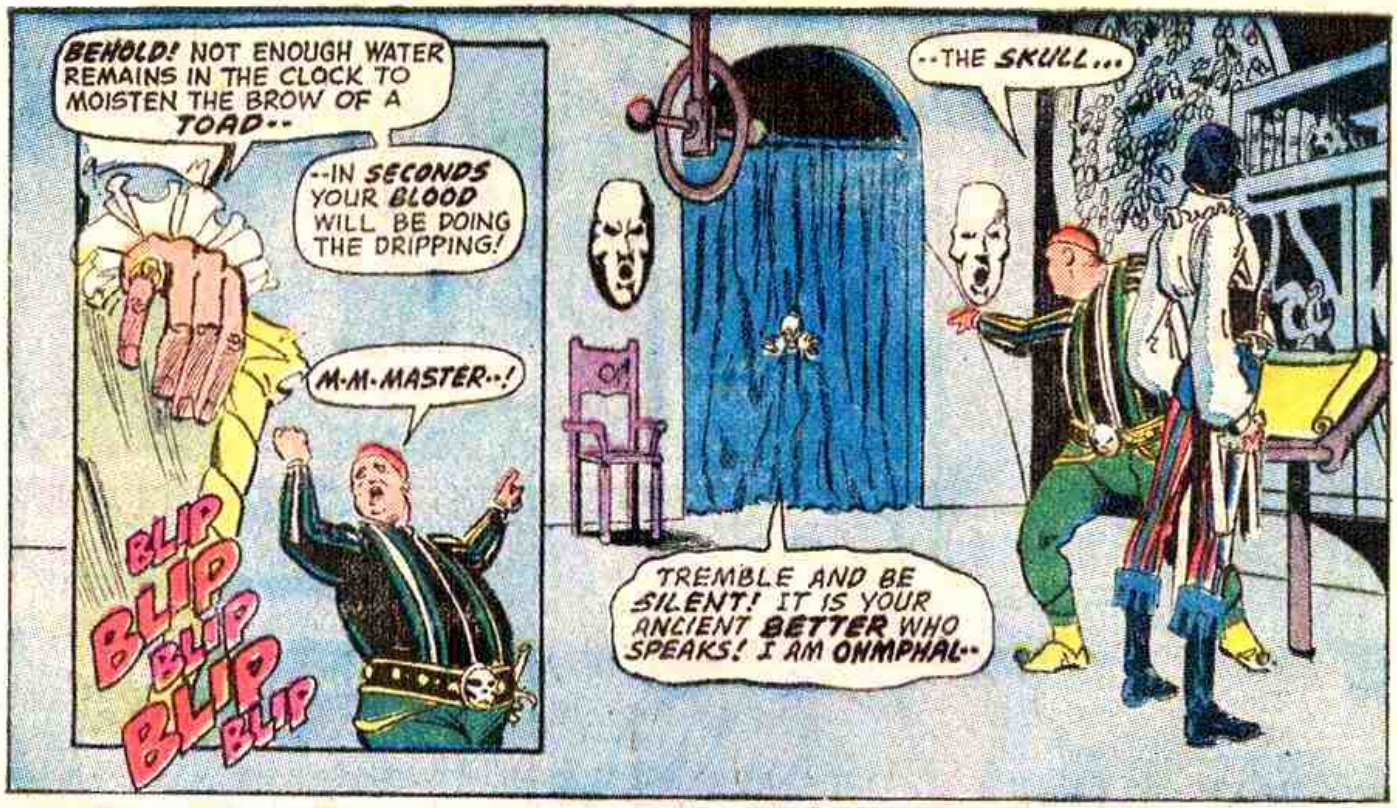
WITHOUT WARNING, THE ANSWER TO THE MOUSER'S PRAYER COMES FLYING FROM THE SILKY DARKNESS...


EEE-K!
SAVE YOUR SCREAMS! THE DAGGER WASN'T MEANT TO DRAW MY BLOOD, BUT TO CATCH MY ATTENTION!
IT BRINGS ME A PARCHMENT!
--AND ON THE PARCHMENT,,, AN ULTIMATUM--A THREAT!
If you do not bring the jewelled skull to Shagoth's chamber this next midnight, we will begin to kill Fafhrd.
HMMM,,, TO SAVE FAF, I'VE GOT TO RE-STEAL THE SKULL! NOT AN EASY TASK--
FORTUNATELY, I HAVE AN IDEA WHERE IT IS--WHERE IT HAS TO BE!
TO GET IT, THOUGH, WILL REQUIRE MUCH CUNNING!
I SEE A PLAN DANCING ACROSS YOUR FACE!
--AND YOU CAN HELP! I'LL NEED TO BORROW SOME OF YOUR THINGS,,,
AGAIN, THE FOLLOWING NIGHT, FOG CREEPS INTO LANKHMAR,,, SOUNDS ARE MUFFLED AND TORCHES ARE RINGED WITH SMOKY HALOS! IT IS NOT YET LATE, ALTHOUGH MIDNIGHT IS NEARING--
,,,THE AVENUES ARE FILLED WITH DRINKERS HAPPILY LAUGHING FROM THEIR FIRST CUPS! IN THE STREET TO THAT ON WHICH STANDS THIEVES HOUSE, THE CROWD IS THINNING,,,
15

AN OLD WOMAN PAUSES IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE OF ONE IVLIS, AND...
LET ME IN! I BEAR NEWS FROM THE GODS!
GO'WAY, OLD WITCH! NONE ENTERS TONIGHT!
NOK NOK
NO! LET THE WISE WOMAN IN! SHE'S ALONE...
IF YE BE IVLIS, I HAVE IMPORTANT WORDS FOR YOU!
THEN IN IVLIS' CHAMBER...
YOU READ THE FUTURE, HAG?
BY HAND AND HAIR I READ IT! BY PALM AND HEART AND EYE!
EH--? WHAT IS THIS? I SMELL BALDNESS IN THIS AIR!
--AND MORE! I SMELL BONES...
--DEAD MAN'S BONES!
CATCHING HER BREATH, IVLIS GLANCES TOWARD THE LARGE HANGING LAMP...
YOUR LOOK BETRAYS YOU, LADY!
YOU'RE A MAN--!
16


--WHAT'S MORE,... YOU'RE A SPY! WELL, WITH MY HAIRPIN, I'LL CHANGE YOU TO COLD MEAT!
NAUGHTY... NAUGHTY! SUCH UN-LADYLIKE BEHAVIOR--
...THE PROPER SPOT FOR YOUR PIN IS IN YOUR RED TRESSES--NOT MY CARCASS!
I'M AFRAID I'LL HAVE TO RELIEVE YOU OF IT!
--AND LEST YOU BE TEMPTED TO TRY AGAIN, I'LL ADD MY ROPE TO YOUR FINE GOWN!
DON'T FRET... I USE ONLY VERY CLEAN ROPES!
AND THE SCARF I GAG YOU WITH IS GUARANTEED SPOTLESS! -- TO SAY NOTHING OF THE FACT THAT IT IS WOVEN FROM THE COSTLIEST SILK!
BEAUTY LIKE YOURS DESERVES THE BEST!
MMMM-F!!
WHEN YOU SHIFTED YOUR GAZE TO THE UNLIT LAMP, YOU TOLD ME MUCH--
--FOR EXAMPLE, WHERE YOU HID THE SKULL AND HANDS YOU TOOK FROM THIEVES HOUSE!
17

I CAN'T BLAME YOU FOR WANTING THEM! THEY WOULD BUY A LIFETIME OF LUXURY--!
NO! I MUSTN'T THINK GREEDY THOUGHTS WHILE FAFHRD IS IN MORTAL PERIL!
WHICH HE IS... ISN'T HE?
HE IS, MOUSER-- REALLY! FOR IN SLEYVAS'S HALL--
BEHOLD, BARBARIAN! DROP BY DROP, THE WATER DRIPS FROM THE JAR--
BLIP BLUP
PRETTY TOY! SURELY ANY SIX-YEAR-OLD WOULD BE DELIGHTED WITH IT!
--AND AS SOON AS IT IS EMPTY, THE MIDNIGHT HOUR WILL BE AT HAND--!
BLIP BLIP BLIP
ENJOY YOUR JOKES! I WILL HAVE THE FINAL JOKE! UNLESS THE MOUSER APPEARS WITH THE SKULL--
--AT MIDNIGHT, I WILL PERSONALLY DRAW MY EDGE ACROSS YOUR THROAT!
YOUR BLADE WILL BE A WELCOME CHANGE FROM YOUR BAD BREATH, SLEYVAS!
NORTHERN DOG! HOW DARE YOU INSULT THE MASTER--?
HAVE I MENTIONED, FISSIF--
WAP!
...THAT YOU WILL JOIN FAFHRD IN DEATH?
18



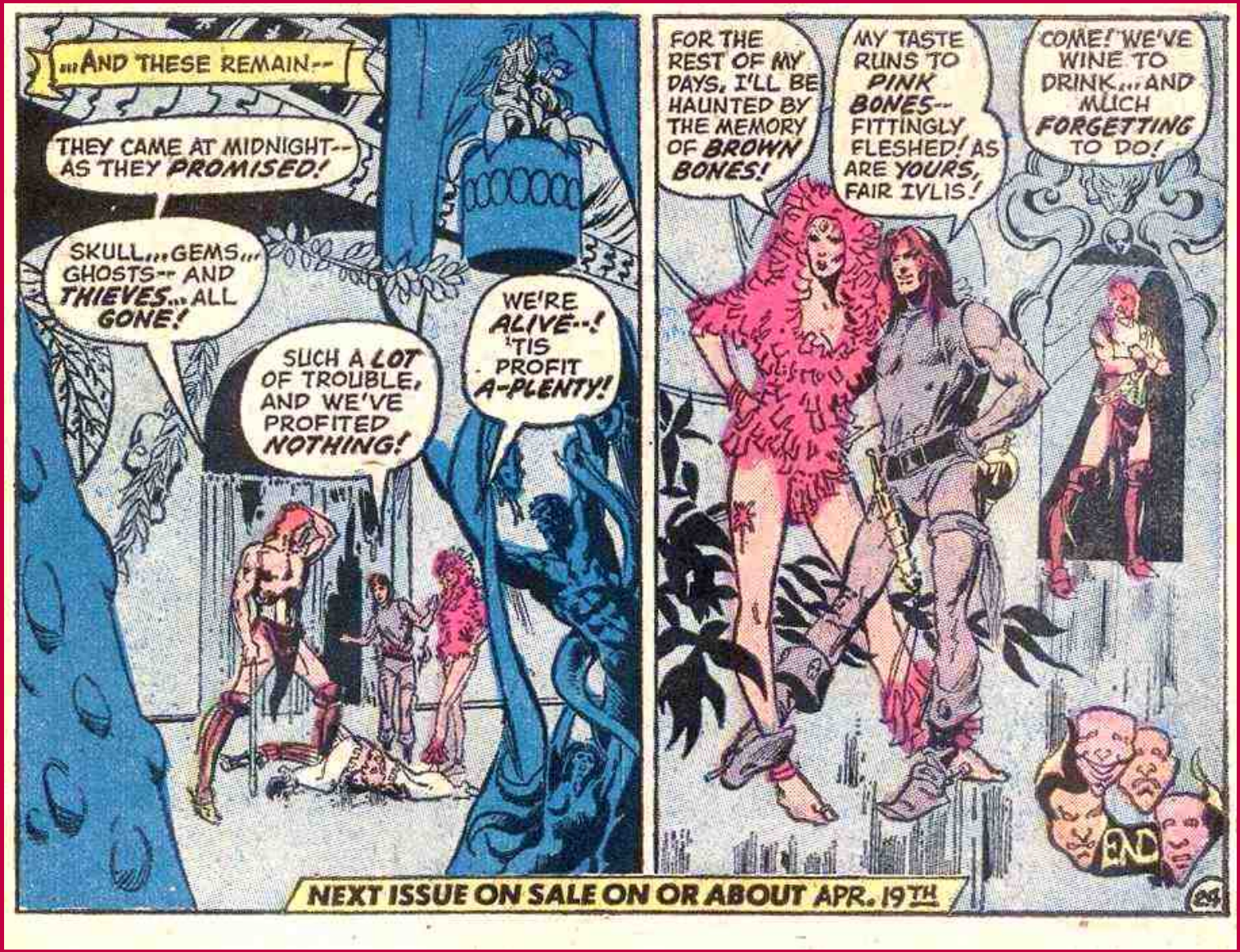
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

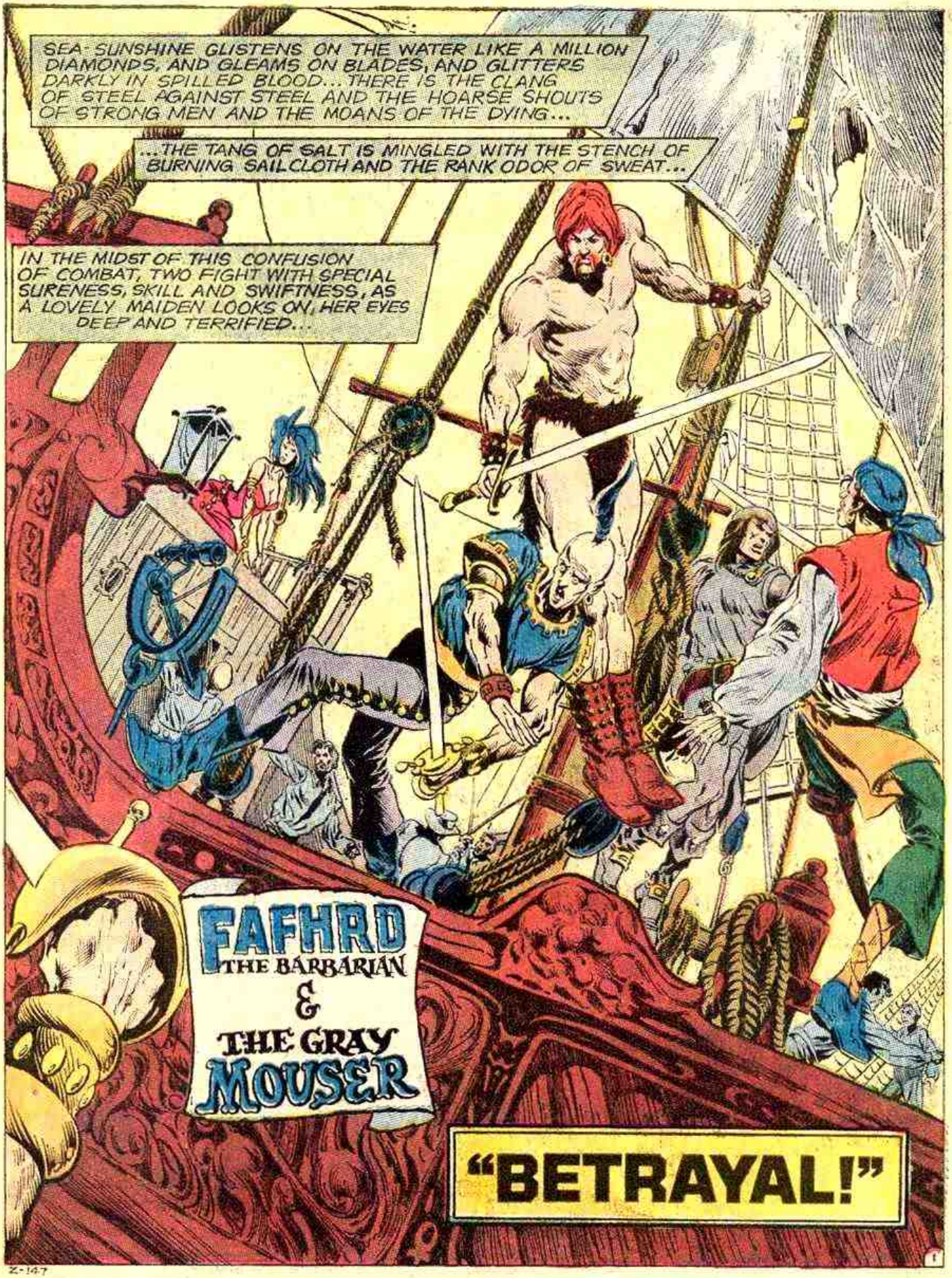
YES! FISSIF'S STICKER WILL SERVE TO SKEWER YOU, SLEYVAS! WILL YOU FIGHT...?
I'D RATHER WHISTLE-- FOR MY FOLLOWERS!
--AND IS ANSWERED IMMEDIATELY BY A HORDE OF CUTTHROATS!
A SHRILL BLAST ECHOES BRIEFLY THROUGHOUT THIEVES HOUSE--
AT HIM, HEARTIES!
HOLD YOUR GROUND, THIEVES! OMPHAL COMMANDS IT!
DARE A STEP AND I WILL VISIT UPON YOU MY WRATH--
--YEOWWW!
MISTRESS IVLIS! HOW NICE TO SEE YOU... AND YOUR PIN!
SURPRISED? MY MAID FREED ME FROM YOUR BONDS... AND I FOLLOWED YOU THROUGH THE TUNNEL FROM MY HOUSE TO HERE!
20

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

THE DOOR IS...CLOSED!
THE WIND MUST HAVE BLOWN IT SHUT! AND THERE IS NO WAY TO OPEN IT FROM THIS SIDE-- NONE!
THEN OUR CHOICE IS SIMPLE--
--TO FALL LIKE BEASTS... OR LIKE MEN!
LET IT BE AS MEN!
I HAVE BUT ONE WISH-- TO LIVE UNTIL I REACH SLEYVAS!
MAY THE GODS GRANT IT!
BLIP BLIP
AS THE DEATH-DUEL RAGES, THE FINAL DROP OF WATER SLIDES FROM THE CLOCK AND FALLS UNNOTICED...
M-MASTER! THE SKULL...
WHAT OF IT, DOLT?
THE EYES SHINE AS THOUGH FLAMES BURN WITHIN... AND THE JAWS CLAMP THEIR TEETH!
FOOL! CAN FLESHLESS BONES MOVE? SO YOU BELIEVE THOSE OLD WIVES' WHISPERS?
I-- AND NONE OTHER-- AM YOUR MASTER!
SLUUNK!
22

AN ABRUPT, INTENSE DARKNESS, AND AN ODOR-- DUSTY, DRY, HOT... AND IN THE BLACKNESS, THREE SHIMMERING FORMS MATERIALIZE...
DEFILER OF OHMPHAL--
--FEEL THE VENGEANCE--
--OF OMPHAL'S BROTHERS!
RELENTLESSLY, OHMPHAL'S FINGERS CLASP THE THIEF'S THROAT...
...AND SQUEEZE...
SQUEEZE... SQUEEZE...
...AND AS THE GHOSTLY FIGURES TURN, SLEYVAS'S FOLLOWERS, THEIR SOULS TORN WITH TERROR, STUMBLE SHRIEKING FROM THE STILL THING THAT WAS THEIR LEADER...
23

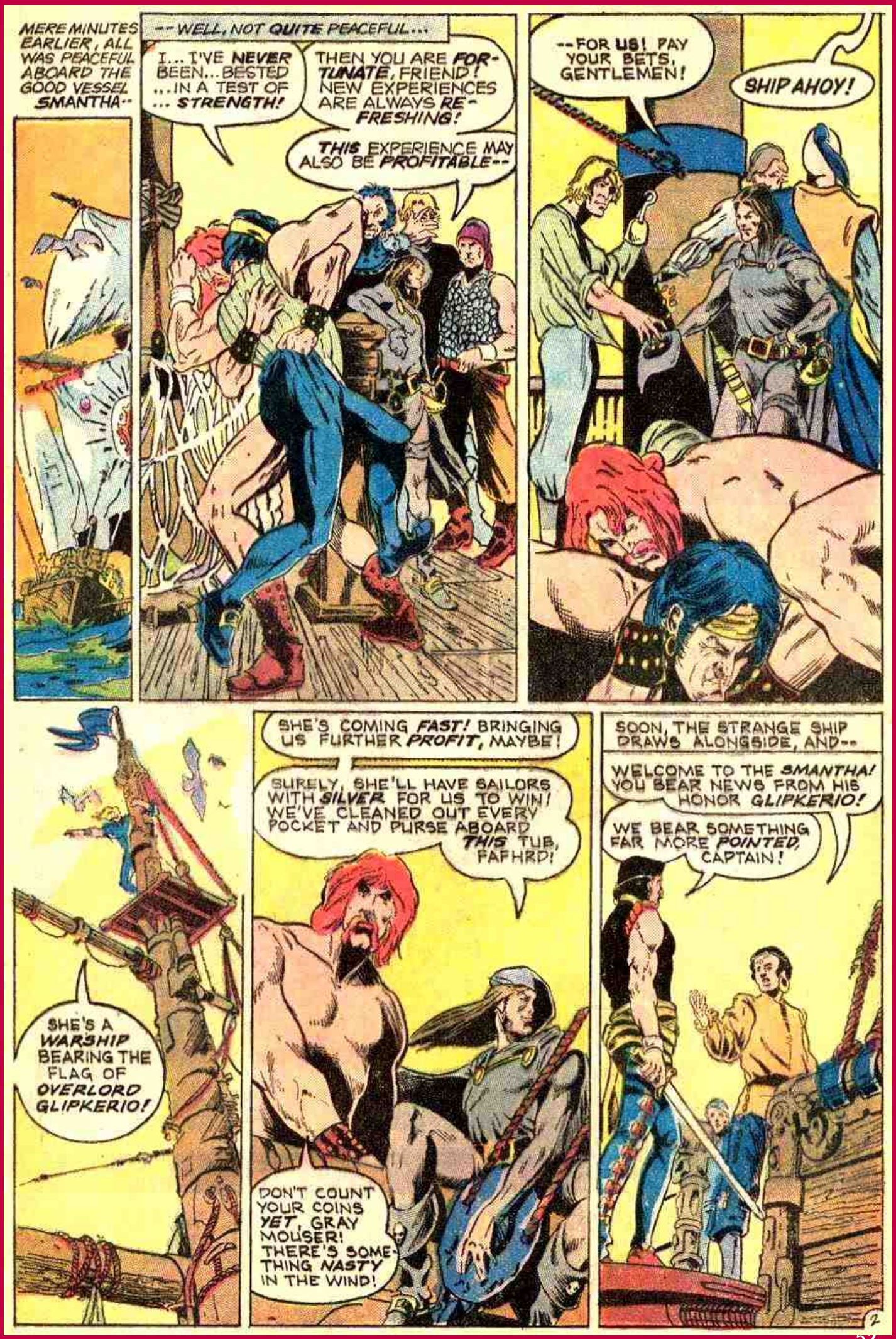

...AND THESE REMAIN--
THEY CAME AT MIDNIGHT-- AS THEY PROMISED!
SKULL... GEMS... GHOSTS-- AND THIEVES... ALL GONE!
SUCH A LOT OF TROUBLE, AND WE'VE PROFITED NOTHING!
WE'RE ALIVE--! 'TIS PROFIT A-PLENTY!
FOR THE REST OF MY DAYS, I'LL BE HAUNTED BY THE MEMORY OF BROWN BONES!
MY TASTE RUNS TO PINK BONES-- FITTINGLY FLESHED! AS ARE YOURS, FAIR IVLIS!
COME! WE'VE WINE TO DRINK... AND MUCH FORGETTING TO DO!
END
NEXT ISSUE ON SALE ON OR ABOUT APR. 19TH



SWORD OF SORCERY, Vol. 1, No. 3, July-Aug., 1973. Published bi-monthly by NATIONAL PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS, INC., 909 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022. Carmine Infantino: Publisher. Dennis O'Neil: Editor. Sol Harrison, Production Manager. Advertising Representative, Sanford Schwarz & Co., Inc., 16 West 46th Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. Copyright ©1973 by National Periodical Publications, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. No actual persons, living or dead, are intended or should be inferred. Printed in U.S.A.

SUBSCRIPTION DEPT.: P.O. Box 1047, Flushing, N.Y. 11352. Rates for fifteen 20c issues $3.00 in U.S. and Possessions; $4.00 elsewhere.

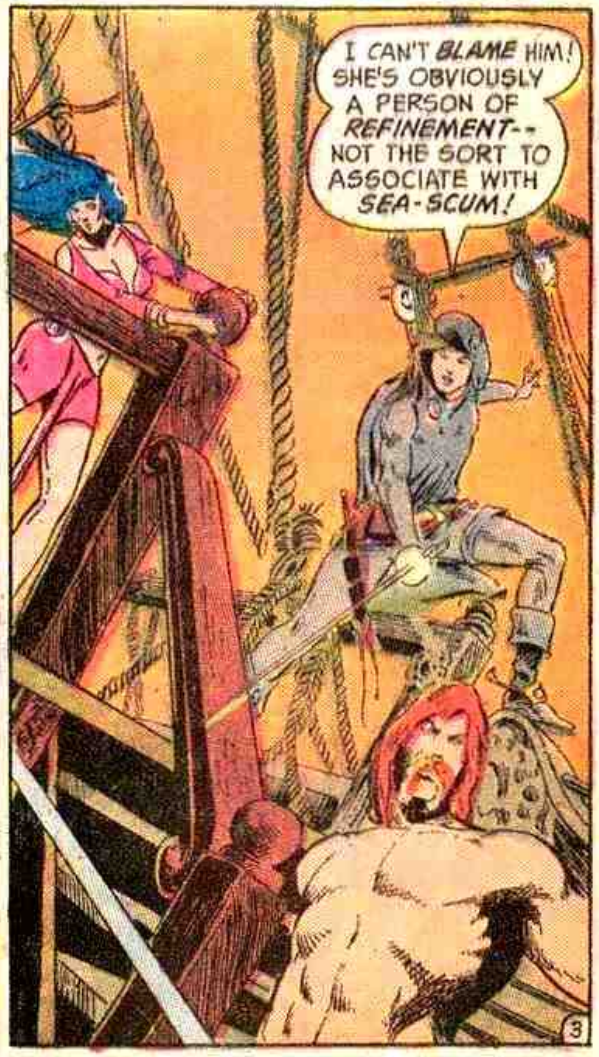
This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition, nor affixed to, nor as part of any advertising, literary or pictorial matter


MERE MINUTES EARLIER, ALL WAS PEACEFUL ABOARD THE GOOD VESSEL SMANTHA--
--WELL, NOT QUITE PEACEFUL...
I... I'VE NEVER BEEN... BESTED ...IN A TEST OF ... STRENGTH!
THEN YOU ARE FORTUNATE, FRIEND! NEW EXPERIENCES ARE ALWAYS REFRESHING!
THIS EXPERIENCE MAY ALSO BE PROFITABLE--
--FOR US! PAY YOUR BETS, GENTLEMEN!
SHIP AHOY!
SHE'S A WARSHIP BEARING THE FLAG OF OVERLORD GLIPKERIO!
SHE'S COMING FAST! BRINGING US FURTHER PROFIT, MAYBE!
SURELY, SHE'LL HAVE SAILORS WITH SILVER FOR US TO WIN! WE'VE CLEANED OUT EVERY POCKET AND PURSE ABOARD THIS TUB, FAFHRD!
DON'T COUNT YOUR COINS YET, GRAY MOUSER! THERE'S SOMETHING NASTY IN THE WIND!
SOON, THE STRANGE SHIP DRAWS ALONGSIDE, AND--
WELCOME TO THE SMANTHA! YOU BEAR NEWS FROM HIS HONOR GLIPKERIO!
WE BEAR SOMETHING FAR MORE POINTED, CAPTAIN!
2

HE'S SLAIN OUR LEADER!
A DISTINCTLY HOSTILE ACT, EH MOUSER? I TOLD YOU I SENSED FOULNESS!
YOU DID INDEED, NORTHERNER!

PUT FIRE TO THE SAILS AND STEEL TO THE CREW!
I SUPPOSE THAT INCLUDES US-- ALTHOUGH WE'RE ONLY PASSENGERS!
SUCH LOUTS AS THESE AREN'T LIKELY TO MAKE FINE DISTINCTIONS!

FAFHRD--DO YOU SEE WHAT'S APPEARED ON THE AFTER-DECK?
AYE! A LASS!.. I WONDERED WHAT THE CAPTAIN WAS HIDING IN HIS CABIN!


I CAN'T BLAME HIM! SHE'S OBVIOUSLY A PERSON OF REFINEMENT-- NOT THE SORT TO ASSOCIATE WITH SEA-SCUM!
3

WE BID YOU GOOD AFTERNOON, MISS! I AM FAFHRD ...YON SMALL, SLICK ONE IS CALLED THE GRAY MOUSER!
WE'LL MAKE MORE FORMAL INTRODUCTIONS WHEN THE PRESENT UNPLEASANTNESS IS DONE!
FAF--HAVE YOU NOTICED WE'RE LOSING THE BATTLE?
I DON'T DOUBT IT! AFTER ALL, WE ARE OUTNUMBERED FIVE-FOLD!
NOT TO WORRY THOUGH! BEAR IN MIND THE GODS PROTECT THE VIRTUOUS!
TRUE! SURELY THE GODS WILL INTERVENE!
AT THAT INSTANT, THE FIRE-WEAKENED SPAR CRACKS...FALLS, AND...
KLUNK!
HERE'S OUR PRIZE, LADS! GREETINGS, PRINCESS! I AM CAPTAIN DUGIM!
DON'T TOUCH ME--! DON'T DARE! OR... I'LL SCREAM!
4

SCREAM AWAY! YOU'LL BE HEEDED BY FISH... AND DEAD MEN!
FINISH YOUR SPORT, LADS, AND SINK THIS UNFORTUNATE SHIP! IT WON'T DO TO LEAVE EVIDENCE OF OUR WORK!
AS YOU COMMAND, CAPTAIN DUGIM!
THEY'RE ESCAPING CLEAN... WITH THE GIRL! SOMEDAY, I VOW, I'LL REPAY THEIR VILLAINY!
BUT FIRST, THE MOUSER AND I MUST SURVIVE!
...I'M STILL GROGGY FROM THE BLOW TO MY SKULL! IT'S ACTUALLY TAKING EFFORT TO HEAVE THE SPAR--
--AND THE THING CAN'T WEIGH MORE THAN 500 POUNDS!
NO POINT IN REMAINING ON DECK! THE WATER'S ALREADY KNEE-HIGH!
THE VILLAINS WERE THOROUGH! ONLY THE MOUSER AND I ARE YET BREATHING!
I'LL COMMIT US TO THE TENDER MERCIES OF THE SEA... AND HOPE!
WELL, YOU'RE AWAKE, SMALL ONE! HAVE A PLEASANT NAP?
NOT PARTICULARLY! I DREAMED WE WERE ADRIFT HUNDREDS OF LEAGUES FROM THE NEAREST LAND, WITH NEITHER FOOD NOR WEAPONS--
--WHICH WE ARE!
5

FOR LONG DAYS, THEY FLOAT, TORMENTED BY HEAT, MADDENED BY THE WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE...
...UNTIL, AT LAST, A CRAFT APPEARS FROM THE SHIMMERING DISTANCE...
...STRONG FINGERS GRIP THEIR BLISTERED FLESH AND HAUL THEM ABOARD...
IT IS NOT A PLEASANT VOYAGE FOR THE BARBARIAN AND THE MOUSER...
A FEW NIGHTS' REST, A BELLYFUL OF MEAT, AND THIS PAIR WILL SERVE AS WORTHY DECK HANDS!
NAY! THEY'LL BE WORTHY SLAVES!
FASTER, YOU SCURVY WRETCHES!
PATIENCE, SMALL ONE! SOON OR LATE, I'LL MAKE HIM EAT HIS WHIP!
EVENTUALLY, THE JOURNEY ENDS AT THE PORT OF LANKHMAR--
--AND...
SIR SLAVEMASTER! I PROMISED MY FRIEND A CERTAIN DEED... CONCERNING YOU AND YOUR WHIP!
NO...
OWWW!
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.
6

A WEEK LATER AT THE SUBURBAN PALACE OF OVERLORD GLIPKERIO--

I TELL YOU, THE DUTIES OF A RULER ARE STRENUOUS! THE BURDENS OF STATECRAFT ARE HEAVY!

ANOTHER DRAM OF WINE, MY DEAR!

HIGHNESS, A PAIR OF MERCHANTS ARE AT THE GATE! THEY CARRY FINE GEMS!

YES, MY LORD!

WE CAN ALWAYS USE A FEW EXTRA DIAMONDS AND RUBIES, I SUPPOSE!

SHOW THEM IN!

WELCOME, MERCHANTS! DISPLAY YOUR GEMS FOR MY HIGHNESS, EH?

YOU MISUNDERSTAND! WE SAID NOTHING ABOUT GEMS TO YOUR SERVANT!

NO... WE TOLD HIM WE BEAR STONE!

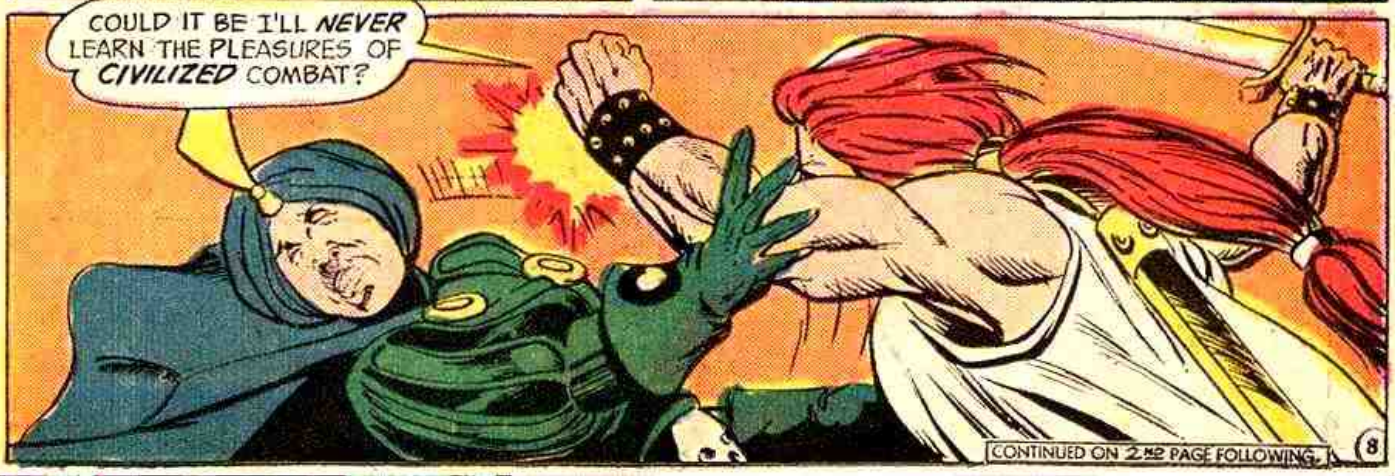
WHY... IT'S A PLAIN, ORDINARY ROCK!

IS THIS A JOKE?

NO... NOR ARE WE REAL MERCHANTS!

FAFHRD... AND THE MOUSER!

G-G-G-G-GUARDS!!



CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

OUR ESTEEMED HOST SEEMS TO BE LEAVING--IN A HURRY!
HE RUNS WELL... CONSIDERING HE'S A SKINNY, PAMPERED, CLUMSY SLOB!
CHK!
CHK!
AHHH... HE'S DECIDED TO STAY!-- HOW THOUGHTFUL!
IF YOU RECALL, MOUSER...I RECENTLY HAD OCCASION TO STUFF A LASH INTO AN UGLY MOUTH!
I'M THINKING I'LL FEED OUR ROCK TO THE OVERLORD--
FIRST, HOWEVER, I'LL HAVE TO BREAK IT INTO TINY PIECES!
...OVER HIS HEAD!
WHATEVER YOU WANT IS YOURS! GOLD... CASTLES... FEASTS...
...D-D-DANCING GIRLS?
NO... INFORMATION! WHY DID YOU SEND YOUR SLIMY CAPTAIN DUGIM TO SCUTTLE THE SMANTHA...AND MURDER HER CREW?
--AND CAPTURE THE MAIDEN?
9

IT WASN'T MY FAULT... I SWEAR! FOUL DUGIM REBELLED AGAINST ME... STOLE THE WARSHIP... ACTED ON HIS OWN!
THE GIRL HE TOOK IS PRINCESS SHADA! HE DEMANDS RANSOM FROM HER FATHER... KING STRUMBOL!

STRUMBOL BLAMES ME! HE THREATENS TO DECLARE WAR UNLESS SHADA IS RETURNED... FOR SHE IS HIS FIRST-BORN, AND HE LOVES HER DEARLY!
WHY DOESN'T HE SIMPLY PAY THE RANSOM?

ALAS... ALTHOUGH STRUMBOL LOVES HIS CHILD, HE LOVES HIS TREASURE MORE!
HE IS THE VERY CHEAPEST OF KINGS!
BUT YOUR TIMELY PRESENCE GIVES ME AN IDEA!

YOU... HAVE AN IDEA? THE POOR THING MUST BE LONELY!
I WOULD HIRE YOU TO FIND AND RESCUE THE PRINCESS!
EXCELLENT! WE'LL REQUIRE A SMALL FLEET, FOUR-HUNDRED SOLDIERS...

GLADLY I WOULD GRANT YOUR REQUEST--IF I COULD! BUT MY SHIPS ARE DISPATCHED TO FOREIGN PORTS...
HALF OF MY ARMY IS ON... AH--LEAVE!
I HEARD YOUR FIGHTERS HAVE BEEN DESERTING IN DROVES!
WHAT CAN YOU GIVE US?

MAGIC! I PUT KOHN--MY STAFF SORCERER--AT YOUR BIDDING!
VISITORS! ENTER MY MODEST QUARTERS!
MAGIC IS ALIVE!

HAVE I GOT A TRICK FOR YOU! PICK A CARD ... ANY CARD--
SILENCE, KOHN! WE DO NOT SEEK AMUSEMENT!
QUICKLY, THE OVERLORD GLIPKERIO EXPLAINS THE SITUATION TO THE SLIGHTLY BEFUDDLED MAGICIAN...
CAN YOU AID US, WIZARD?
OH CERTAINLY! FOLLOW ME OUTSIDE--
--AND BEHOLD! MY GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT... AN AIRSHIP!
KEEP THE STOVE SUPPLIED WITH FUEL... WHICH IN TURN FILLS THE BALLOON WITH HOT AIR--
THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF THAT IN THIS PALACE--
--AND YOU'LL BE LIFTED FREE OF NEHWON'S CLUTCHES...YOU'LL SOAR LIKE BUTTERFLIES!
11

SPLENDID! BUT YOU HAVEN'T GIVEN US THE MEANS OF FINDING DUGIM!
I SHALL, LADDY! ALLOW ME TO WHISTLE--
F-WHEEEEET!
THE CREATURE APPROACHING FROM SKYWARD IS ENCHANTED --ABLE TO LOCATE ANYTHING!
BY THE GODS--
--I CAN'T CREDIT MY EYES! THEY LIE!
NO, YOU SEE TRULY! LISSA, HERE, HAS SUFFERED A CURSE PLACED ON HER BY HER HUSBAND A JEALOUS NECROMANCER!
FOR DECADES, I'VE BEEN LABORING TO RETURN HER TO NORMAL WOMANHOOD--IN VAIN!
SHE IS A SWEET BEING... AND HAS SUFFERED MUCH! TREAT HER KINDLY!
REST ASSURED, WIZARD! -- WE WILL!
THERE IS NO REASON FOR FURTHER DELAY!
I NEARLY FORGOT! ACCEPT MY DECK OF CARDS! SHOULD YOU BE IN A GRAVE PERIL, SPRINKLE THEM WITH WATER FROM A CLOUD!
IN AN EMERGENCY, THEY ARE OF GREATER USE THAN A REGIMENT!
REMEMBER-- THE WATER MUST BE FROM A CLOUD!
CONTINUED ON 5TH PAGE FOLLOWING.
12

RETURN THE PRINCESS AND YOUR REWARD WILL BE RICH!
FAIR SAILING--!

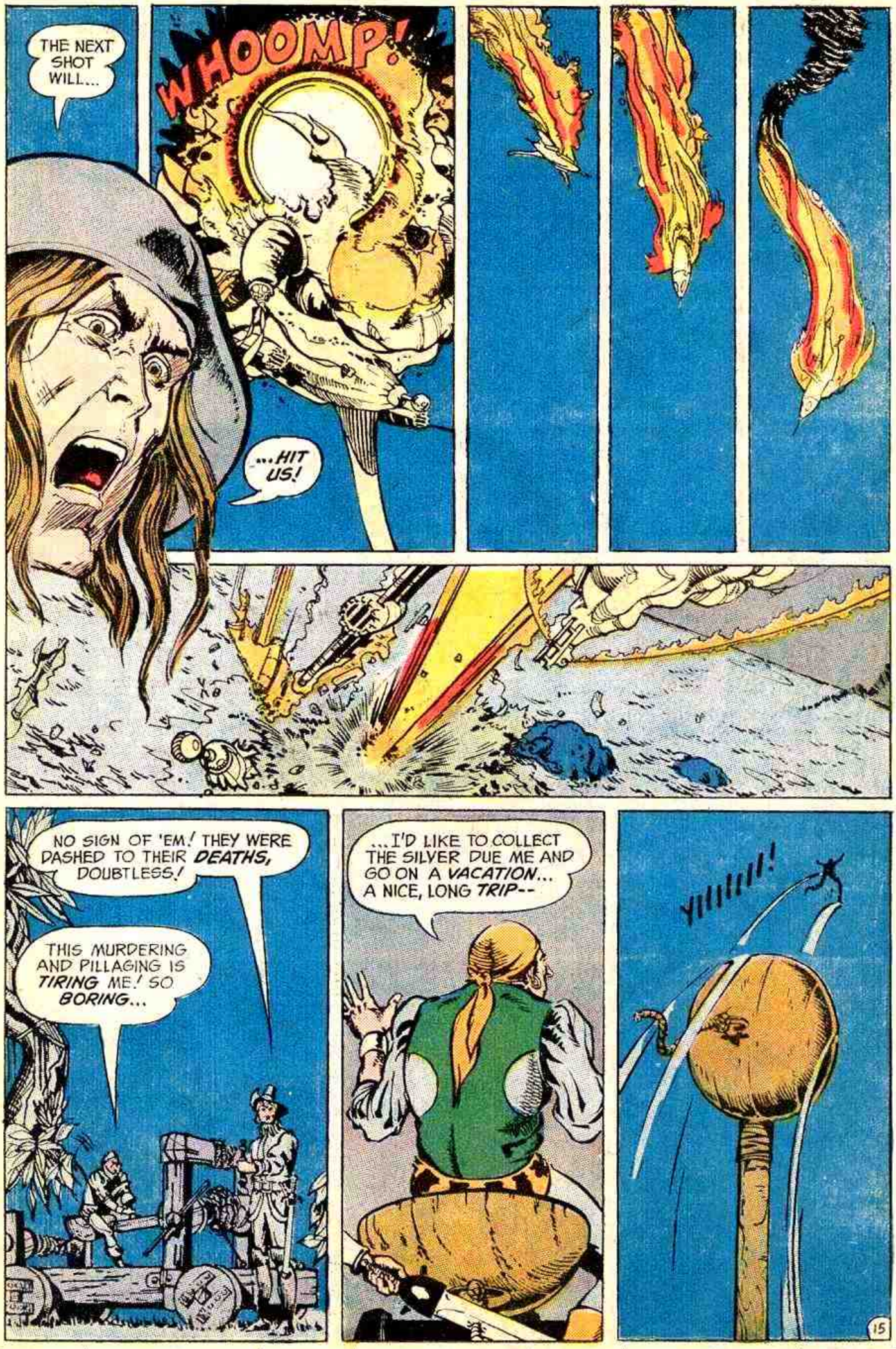
YOU KNOW, SMALL ONE--LIFE IS AN ENTERTAINMENT! FULL OF DELIGHTS... SURPRISES...
I NEVER IMAGINED I'D BE... FLYING!
--TO DANGER--

--YON SKY IS BLACK WITH STORM... AND LISSA IS FLAPPING STRAIGHT TOWARD IT!
I DOUBT OUR AIR-BAG CAN STAND MUCH BUFFETING!

WE'RE ABOVE THAT DAMNABLE OCEAN AGAIN! I LOST ALL TASTE FOR SWIMMING DURING THE DAYS WE WERE ADRIFT--
--AND THERE'S NO LAND IN SIGHT!
WRONG, MOUSER--

I CAN BARELY SEE A SPECK-- AN ISLAND-- ON THE HORIZON! 'TIS EXACTLY WHERE LISSA IS LEADING US!
NOT A SECOND TOO SOON!-- I JUDGE THESE FEW RAINDROPS WILL BECOME A TORRENT!
13

AND, ON THE ISLAND....
THE LAST FLAGON OF BREW I QUAFFED ADDLED MY SENSES!
THAT--OR SOMEONE'S ENCHANTED MY SPYGLASS!
REAL OR NO, A BALL OF BURNING PITCH OUGHT TO DEAL WITH THEM!
PREPARE THE CATAPULT!
IT'S READY--
LOOK FOR YOURSELF! A SKYBORNE BOAT... A BIRD-WOMAN... THEY CAN'T BE REAL!
SH!
THEN SEND THEM A GIFT OF FIRE!
WHOOOOO
BLAST! WATER ABOVE... WATER BELOW--AND FLAME IN BETWEEN!--WHY DIDN'T I HEED MY MOTHER'S ADVICE--
--AND BECOME A POT-MAKER?!
WE'RE LOSING ALTITUDE... THE RAIN IS COOLING THE AIR IN THE BALLOON!
14

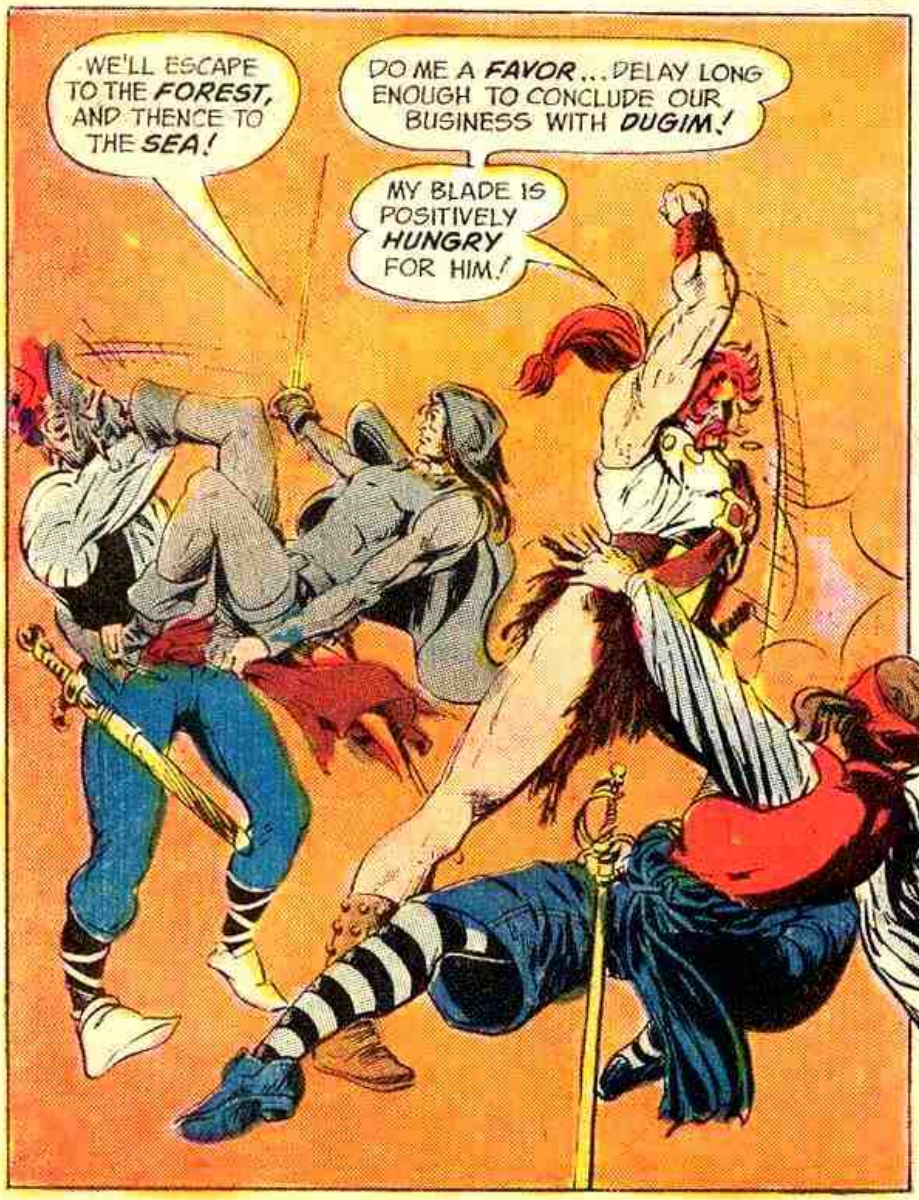

THE NEXT SHOT WILL...
WHOOMP!
...HIT US!
NO SIGN OF 'EM! THEY WERE DASHED TO THEIR DEATHS, DOUBTLESS!
THIS MURDERING AND PILLAGING IS TIRING ME! SO BORING...
...I'D LIKE TO COLLECT THE SILVER DUE ME AND GO ON A VACATION... A NICE, LONG TRIP--
YIIIIIII!
15

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

PEERING THROUGH THE UNDERBRUSH, THE THREE RESCUERS VIEW THE FINAL, FIZZLING REMNANTS OF A PARTY...

DUGIM DARES EMBRACE THE PRINCESS! BY THE DEMENTED DEMONS, I'LL GRIND HIS BONES TO BIRDSEED!
...NO OFFENSE, LISSA!
COUNT US FORTUNATE, FAF! I'LL WAGER THEY CAN'T TELL WHICH END OF OF A SWORD IS POINTED!

CLEVERNESS IS NOT REQUIRED! INSTEAD, I SUGGEST WE RELY ON SURPRISE!
I'LL SETTLE WITH ANY OF DUGIM'S SLIMIES STILL ABLE TO MOVE WHILE YOU SNATCH THE PRINCESS!


WE'LL ESCAPE TO THE FOREST, AND THENCE TO THE SEA!
DO ME A FAVOR... DELAY LONG ENOUGH TO CONCLUDE OUR BUSINESS WITH DUGIM!
MY BLADE IS POSITIVELY HUNGRY FOR HIM!

SUDDENLY, AS VICTORY IS IN THEIR GRASP, THE VALIANT PAIR FINDS THE GROUND COLLAPSING BENEATH THEIR BOOTS, AND THEY FALL...
17

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

...AND A PULSE-BEAT LATER; SHE EMERGES, THE CUP NOW BRIMMING, AND SWOOPS DOWNWARD...
...TOWARD WHERE THE MOUSER IS MENTIONING HER NAME...
FAIR LISSA'S ABANDONING US, IT APPEARS!
SHE COULD BE OF NO HELP... AND BESIDES, WHAT DO YOU EXPECT OF A WOMAN--
--EVEN A WOMAN HALF A NOBLER CREATURE?
WE'VE DECIDED YOUR FATES--
--DEATH, YOU WON'T BE SURPRISED TO LEARN! CRASSUS, HERE, WILL DISPATCH YOU!
HEY, CRASSUS...BET YOU AN OUNCE OF GOLD YOU CAN'T KILL 'EM BOTH WITH A SINGLE BLOW!
YOUR BET'S TAKEN!
LISSA'S RETURNED TO BID US A FINAL FAREWELL!
MAYBE NOT, FAF! REMEMBER WHAT THE WIZARD SAID ABOUT THE CARDS--
--HOW A TOUCH OF PURE WATER WILL RENDER 'EM MIGHTIER THAN A REGIMENT?
19

FAF-! THE WIZARD SPOKE THE TRUTH!

THE CARD-FIGURES... THEY'RE ALIVE-- AND GROWING!

--AND ARMED TO THE TEETH!

DUGIM'S THUGS ARE FALLING LIKE LEAVES IN WINTER... AND NO WONDER!

HOW CAN YOU FIGHT PAPER MEN STRONG AS OXEN... WITH PAPER BLADES THAT REALLY CUT!

I'LL BUY THAT WIZARD THE BEST MEAL IN LANK'HMAR, FOR PROVIDING ME WITH SUCH MERRIMENT!

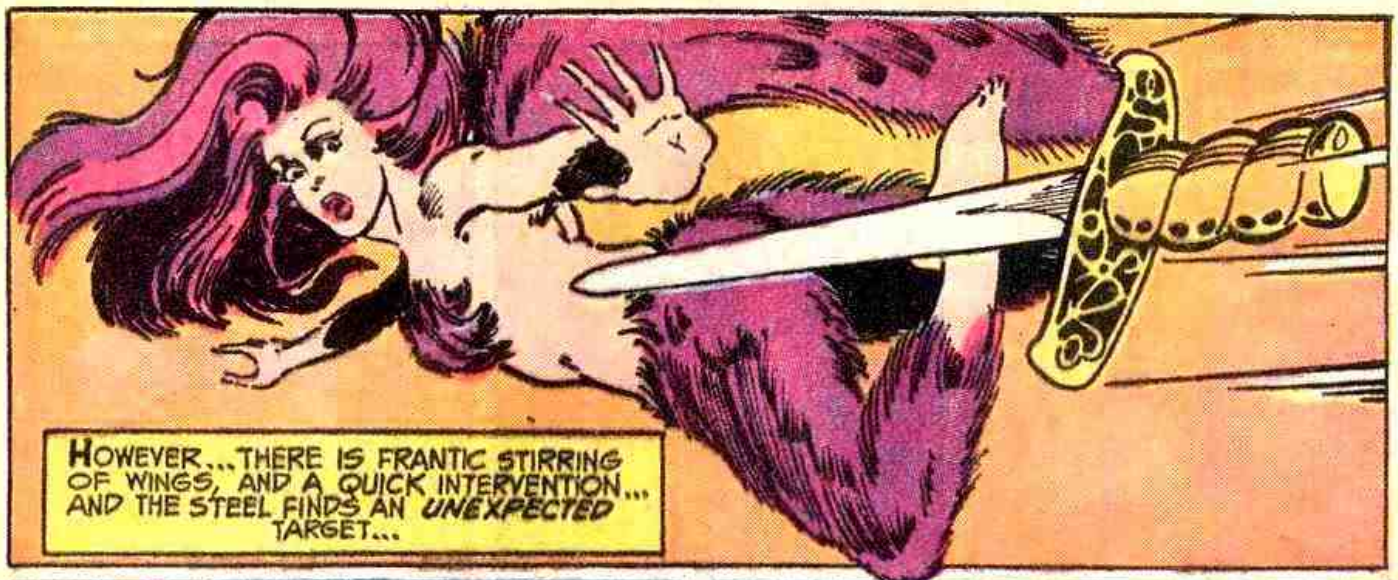
HURRY, LISSA! SEVER OUR BONDS! I WANT TO JOIN THE FUN!

CRASSUS...THAT IS HOW YOU'RE CALLED, ISN'T IT?
BETTER TO CALL YOU WHALE BLUBBER--!
BETWEEN THEM, FAF AND THE CARD-WARRIORS WILL ROUT THE DUGIM CREW!

I BELIEVE YOU INTENDED ME SOME HARM A FEW TICKS AGO?-- SHALL WE TEST WHETHER YOU'VE RETAINED YOUR TASTE FOR BLOODSHED?--
SINCE I'D BE OF NO REAL USE, I'LL OCCUPY MYSELF ELSEWHERE--

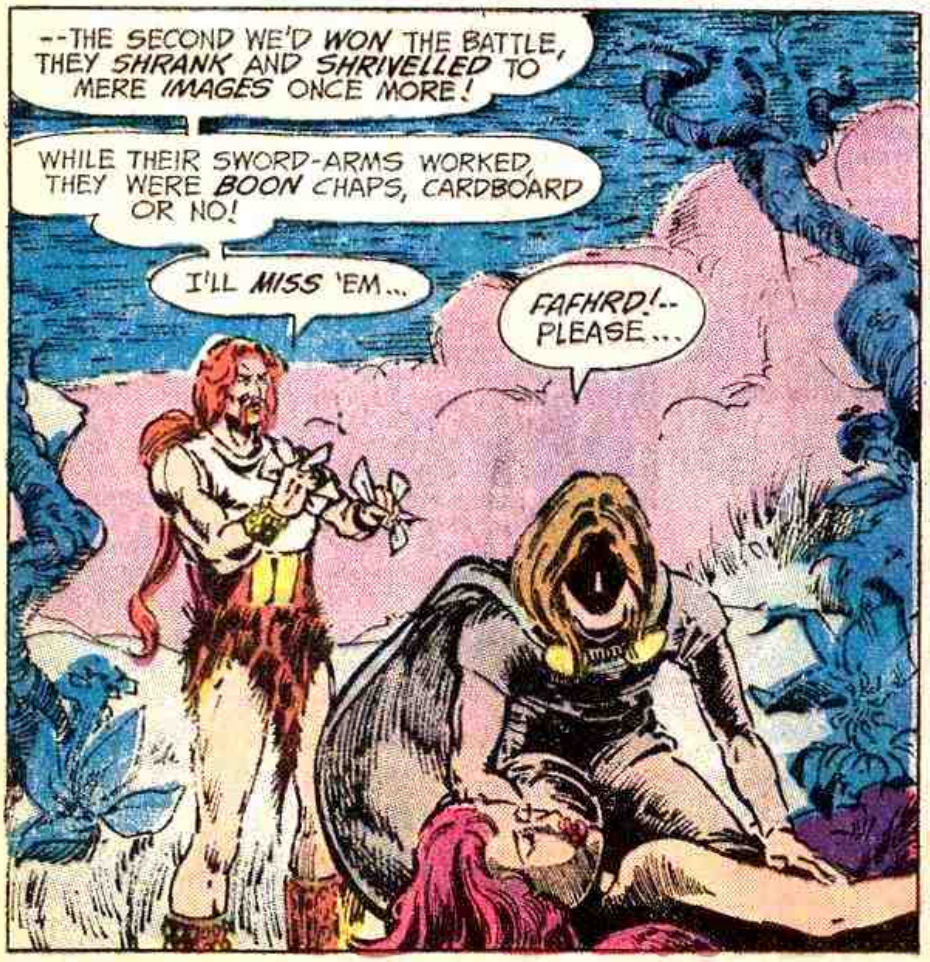
--WITH THEIR ILL-BEGOTTEN LEADER, FOR INSTANCE!
I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'RE WILLING TO SURRENDER!-- ACKNOWLEDGE MY SUPERIORITY?
SURRENDER TO A CUTPURSE NO BIGGER THAN A THIMBLE?
I SUSPECTED YOU'D BE DIFFICULT! NO MATTER... I'M CONSIDERED AN EXPERT AT SILENCING BRAGGARTS WHO MOCK MY... COMPACTNESS--
--I'M ALSO AN AUTHORITY AT RESCUING FAIR MAIDENS!
HAVE NO FEAR, PRINCESS... YOU'LL SHORTLY BE EXCUSED FROM DUGIM'S UNPLEASANTNESS!
21

IN THE NAME OF THE SLAUGHTERED SAILORS OF THE SMANTHA... IN THE NAME OF CLUMSY GLIPKERIO...
...IN THE NAME OF THE INSULTED PRINCESS...
...YES, AND IN THE NAME OF ANY AND ALL HUMAN DECENCY... BUT MOSTLY IN THE NAMES OF FAFHRD AND THE GRAY MOUSER--
...I BID YOU FAREWELL-- FOREVER!
I AM THAT SELFSAME MOUSER, GENTLEMAN OF FORTUNE AND LEISURE, DELIGHTED TO BE AGAIN AT YOUR SERVICE!
YOUR OVERWHELMING GRATITUDE DOUBTLESS HAS YOU TONGUE-TIED! I FULLY UNDERSTAND--
--AND I SHALL WAIT UNTIL...
UNNGH!
BEAST! YOU SLEW HIM WHOM I LOVED! TONIGHT WE WERE CELEBRATING OUR WEDDING!
YOU'LL KEEP DEAR DUGIM COMPANY IN DEATH!
HIS SWORD, IF NOT HIS HAND, WILL END YOUR FOOLISH EXISTENCE--
22


HOWEVER...THERE IS FRANTIC STIRRING OF WINGS, AND A QUICK INTERVENTION... AND THE STEEL FINDS AN UNEXPECTED TARGET...

MOUSER! THIS IS NO TIME FOR REST--

--WE'VE A REWARD TO COLLECT FROM GLIPKERIO!
HAVE YOU SEEN OUR RECENT ALLIES? LOOK AT 'EM...


--THE SECOND WE'D WON THE BATTLE, THEY SHRANK AND SHRIVELLED TO MERE IMAGES ONCE MORE!
WHILE THEIR SWORD-ARMS WORKED, THEY WERE BOON CHAPS, CARDBOARD OR NO!
I'LL MISS 'EM...
FAFHRD!-- PLEASE...

...BE QUIET!
SORRY, MOUSER-- I DIDN'T REALIZE!...

SHE WAS LOVELY, WASN'T SHE?--AND NOBLE, TOO! WE'VE LOST SOMETHING OF VALUE THIS DAY, FAFHRD!
I'LL DO THE BURYING ALONE IF YOU DON'T MIND!
GO ON, MOUSER! I'LL WAIT... FOR AS LONG AS IT TAKES!
NEXT ISSUE ON SALE DURING THE FOURTH WEEK IN JUNE
END

SWORD OF SORCERY, Vol. 1, No. 4, Sept.-Oct., 1973. Published bi-monthly by NATIONAL PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS, INC., 909 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022. Carmine Infantino, Publisher. Dennis O'Neil, Editor. Sol Harrison, Production Manager. Advertising Representative, Sanford Schwarz & Co., Inc., 16 West 46th Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. Copyright ©1973 by National Periodical Publications, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. No actual persons, living or dead, are intended or should be inferred. Printed in U.S.A.

SUBSCRIPTION DEPT.: P.O. Box 1047, Flushing, N.Y. 11352. Rates for fifteen 20c issues $3.00 in U.S. and Possessions; $4.00 elsewhere.

This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition, nor affixed to, nor as part of any advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever.

I RECOGNIZE THIS PAIR...CUT-PURSES AND MURDERERS!
AYE! THE ONE PREPARING TO THROW HIS KNIFE IS GIS! HE BOASTS HIS SPEED IS SUPREME!
'TIS NO BOAST, MOUSER--
--AS YOU'RE ABOUT TO LEARN!
YOU ARE QUICK, DULLARD! IN FACT, I'D SAY YOU'RE THE SECOND FASTEST DAGGER-THROWER IN THE LAND!
CLANK!
OR TO BE EXACT, YOU WERE SECOND FASTEST--
AGH!
AND YOU, GNARLAG OF THE TWO SWORDS-- HAVE YOU ALSO A BOAST?
MY BLADES DO MY TALKING!
--FOR I, OF COURSE, AM TRULY SUPREME!

CARE TO BORROW A SWORD, FAF?--TO EVEN THE ODDS!
KEEP YOUR OVER-SLIM STICKER, SMALL ONE! MY OWN WIDE SWORD AND THIS BRAZIER WILL SERVE FOR SUCH A POOR FOE AS GNARLAG!

NOT THAT IT MATTERS ...BUT WHY HAVE YOU CHOSEN TO ATTACK US? THE GRAY MOUSER AND I ARE NO ENEMIES OF YOURS--
--AT LEAST, NOT SO FAR AS I CAN RECALL!
WE HAVE NO MONEY!

TO SPEAK PLAINLY, WE HOPED TO ROB YOU!
'TWAS A FOOL'S ERRAND...FOR OUR PURSES ARE EMPTY AS A WINE FLASK AFTER A FEAST!

YOU HAVE NO COINS--THEN I'LL SETTLE FOR YOUR BLOOD!
YOU KNOW... I'VE NEVER LIKED YOU, FAFHRD!
I'M AWARE OF THAT AND... ASTONISHINGLY ENOUGH, I'VE NOT LOST A SECOND'S SLEEP BECAUSE OF IT!

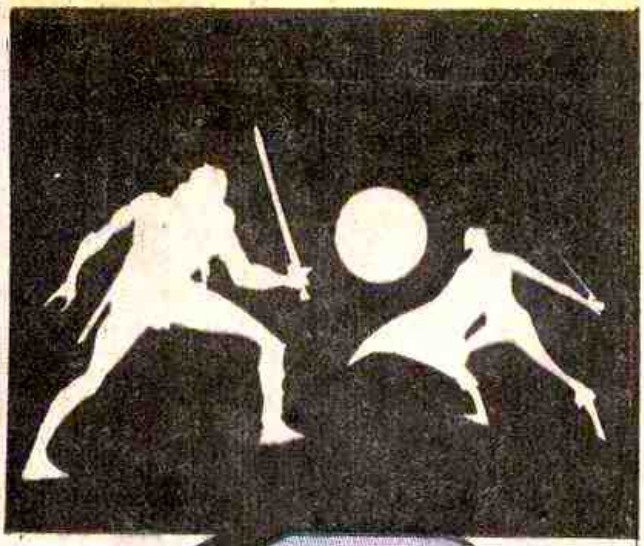
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.

IT'S LIFTING... HUGGING THE ROOFTOPS!
QUICK, FAF--LET'S FOLLOW!
Matick
TO WHAT PURPOSE? HAVEN'T WE HAD PLENTY OF TROUBLE ALREADY?
TROUBLE, YES... LOOT--NO! AS YOU MENTIONED, OUR PURSES ARE EMPTY! THIS GREEDY FOG MIGHT STEAL MORE THAN WEAPONS!
--IT MIGHT HAVE A TASTE FOR SILVER AND GOLD, TOO! MUST I REMIND YOU AGAIN THAT WE CAN USE PRECIOUS METALS?
AND YOU HOPE TO FIND THEM AT THE SOURCE OF THE MIST.?
...I UNDERSTAND YOUR REASONING...AND I AGREE!
IT'S QUITTING THE CITY... HEADING INTO THE FOREST!
WAIT! IT'S PAUSING BY THAT FIRE--! I WONDER... WHOSE FIRE?
I HEARD A BAND OF WANDERING MERCHANTS ARE IN THE AREA! THESE ARE SURELY THEM!
BEST WE LAY BACK AND OBSERVE!
5

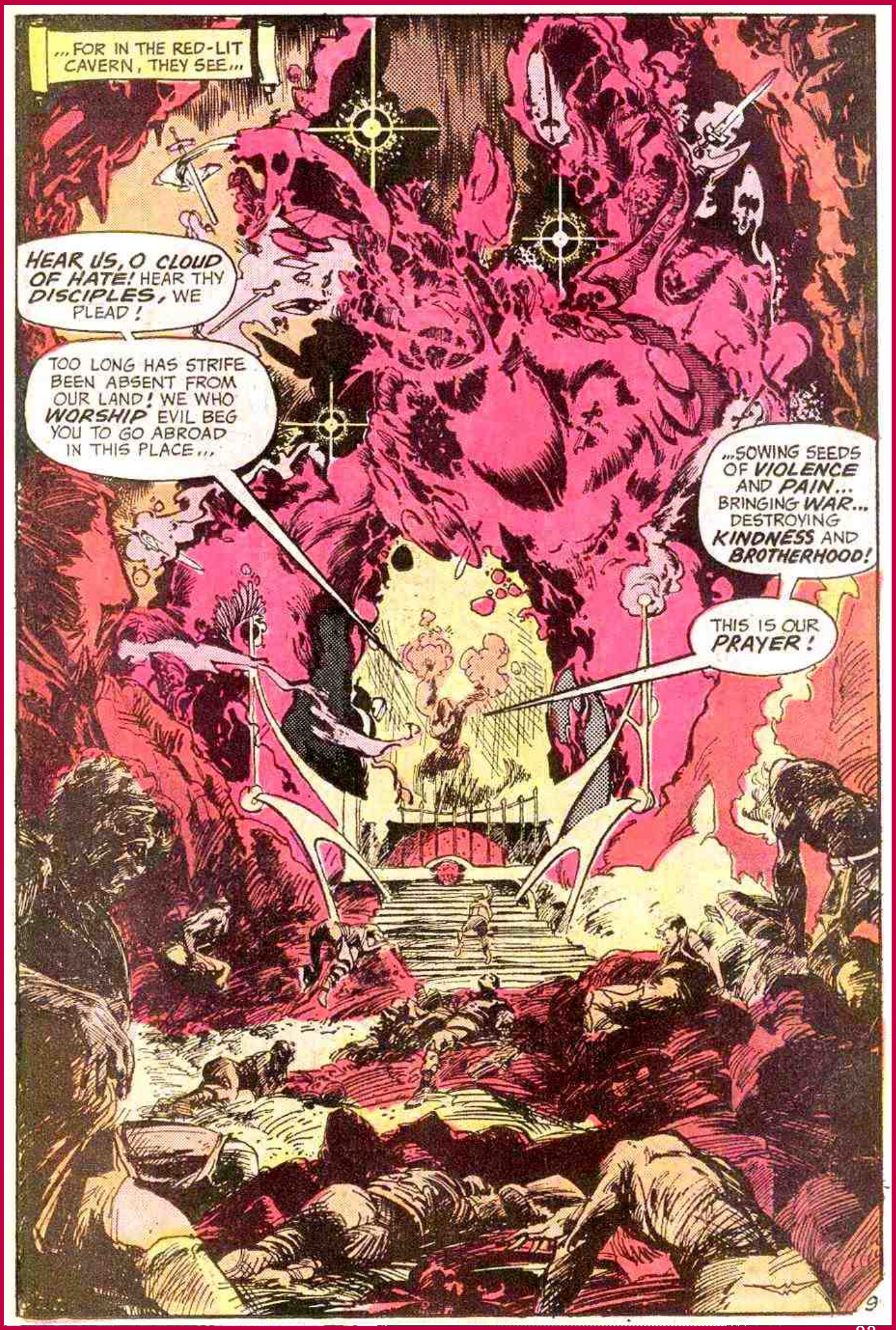
A GIRL, TENDING TO HER MEAL, DOES NOT SEE THE WHITE THING HOVERING ABOVE HER, NARROWING, GROWING DENSER, APPROACHING...
SWAYING, IT DIPS, AND BEFORE SHE CAN UTTER A CRY, SEEPS INTO HER VERY FLESH!
FOR A MOMENT, SHE IS WRENCHED VIOLENTLY AS BREATH IS RIPPED FROM HER...
--AND, AS FAFHRD AND THE MOUSER COVER THE INTERVENING GROUND IN LOPING STRIDES, THE GIRL IS FLUNG TO THE DIRT, LIMP AS A RAG!
TOO LATE! --SHE'S DEAD... HORRIBLY!
AYE...AND MAY BE OUR FAULT! WE DID NOTHING TO SAVE HER!
6

WE'VE NOW A SECOND MOTIVE FOR FOLLOWING THE FOG-THING...
...REVENGE!
THROUGH THE TAINTED DARKNESS THEY STALK, TRAILING THEIR EERIE PREY...
UNTIL, ABRUPTLY...
HALT! YOU MAY PROCEED NO FURTHER!
OH? AND WHY MAY THAT BE?
UH...BECAUSE--BECAUSE... I'LL THINK OF A REASON...
...I'VE GOT IT!--BECAUSE THERE'S A DRAGON LOOSE IN THE WOODS!
YES...A REGULAR FIRE-BREATHER!
THE GENTLEMAN EXPECTS US TO BELIEVE A DRAGON THREATENS US, FAF! DO YOU?
PERMIT ME TO ANSWER THE GENTLEMAN, SMALL ONE!
SOKK!

INTO A GLOOM-HEAVY TUNNEL THEY MOVE, THE STONE BENEATH THEIR FEET COLD AS GLACIER-ICE, CREEPING TOWARD A DISTANT CIRCLE OF LIGHT...



CONTINUED ON 35th PAGE FOLLOWING.


...FOR IN THE RED-LIT CAVERN, THEY SEE...
HEAR US, O CLOUD OF HATE! HEAR THY DISCIPLES, WE PLEAD!
TOO LONG HAS STRIFE BEEN ABSENT FROM OUR LAND! WE WHO WORSHIP EVIL BEG YOU TO GO ABROAD IN THIS PLACE...
...SOWING SEEDS OF VIOLENCE AND PAIN... BRINGING WAR... DESTROYING KINDNESS AND BROTHERHOOD!
THIS IS OUR PRAYER!
9

I'VE HEARD TALES OF THESE HATE-WORSHIPPERS AND THEIR STRANGE, CLOUD-LIKE GOD!
THE PRIEST'S PRATTLING EXPLAINS WHY LANKHMAR HAS BEEN QUIET THESE PAST SIX MONTHS...EXCEPT FOR THE USUAL STABBINGS AND ROBBERIES!
THE QUESTION IS... DO WE STAY... OR RUN...
I'D TOSS A COIN...IF I HAD ONE!
INTENT ON THEIR DEBATE, THE PAIR DO NOT HEAR THE GUARD, NEWLY AWAKENED, APPROACHING THEM...
...UNTIL HE SLAMS INTO THEM—!
INTRUDERS! STOMP... STAB... SLAY THEM!
MOVING AS THOUGH THEY WERE A SINGLE CREATURE, THE MOB SURROUNDS FAFHRD AND THE MOUSER, BLOCKING ALL ESCAPES...
IT SEEMS OUR CHOICE IS MADE FOR US! WE STAY!
WE'VE BEEN IN WORSE SPOTS! THESE UGLIES ARE UNARMED! WE'LL SIMPLY SLICE OUR WAY TO FREEDOM!
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.

KLANG!
I'M BLOCKED FROM ABOVE!
SO... THE MANY-TENTACLED CLOUD HAS TAKEN A HAND... ER... TENTACLE IN THE FRAY!
NO MATTER! I'LL MATCH SKILLS WITH ANYBODY... OR ANYTHING!
FAF--BEFORE YOU GET TOO INVOLVED...
--I'D APPRECIATE YOUR CONSIDERING MY SITUATION!
REMEMBER THE GIRL? I HAVE A STRONG NOTION OUR FOE PLANS A SIMILAR FATE FOR ME!
PERHAPS--BUT THIS TIME I WON'T SIT IDLY BY LIKE THE UGLIEST MAIDEN AT A HARVEST DANCE!
WE'LL SOON LEARN HOW A FINE-HONED EDGE AFFECTS THE MONSTROSITY!
NEATLY HACKED, FAF! I'M LOOSE--!

LET'S NOT RELAX YET, THOUGH! YOU ACCOUNTED FOR ONE TENTACLE! IT HAS DOZENS MORE--
...AND MOST BEAR WEAPONS!
I HAD A MOMENT'S DIFFICULTY WITH GNARLAG... AND HE BORE BUT TWO CUTTERS!
HAVE YOU NOTICED?--WE'RE BEING BACKED INTO A CORNER!
FAF--WE MAY BE ABOUT TO DO SOMETHING WE'VE NEVER DONE BEFORE--LOSE!
I'VE AN IDEA THAT IF WE COULD REACH THE EYE IN THE CENTER OF THE CLOUD--
--WE MIGHT LAY THE HORROR TO REST!
COULD BE! BUT THE EYE IS FOUR MAN LENGTHS FROM THE TALL TOP OF MY HEAD!
UNLESS ONE OF US CAN GROW THREE OR FOUR METERS, I FEAR IT'S HOPELESS!
12

SUDDENLY, THERE IS A MIGHTY AXE-SWIPE, AND...
WE'RE DISARMED!
AND IN BIG TROUBLE!
WE'VE ONLY THIS LEFT TO BATTLE WITH--
--BARELY MORE THAN A NAIL FILE!
STILL...IT JUST MAY BE ENOUGH! WHERE FORCE FAILS, STRATEGY MAY PREVAIL!
THE HORROR PAUSES... SAVORING TRIUMPH, NO DOUBT!
WHILE IT GLOATS, MAKE A STIRRUP OF YOUR PALMS...AND A PRAYER TO YOUR HEATHEN NORTHERN GODS!
NONE IN ALL LANKHMAR POSSESSES GREATER AGILITY THAN THE GREY-CLAD SWORDSMAN --NONE!
13

HE STRIKES--
IMMEDIATELY, THE FOG-BODY COLLAPSES FAR MORE SWIFTLY THAN ANY PUNCTURED BLADDER...
...AND THERE IS A SWIFT, FLEETING RUSH OF STENCH...
...AND IT IS FINISHED...
WE'VE REAPED NEITHER SILVER NOR GOLD FOR OUR LABORS--
BUT WE LIVE, AND THAT'S SUFFICIENT REWARD!
COME...WE'LL SEEK A REFUGE WHERE THE WINE AND THE GIRLS ARE CLEAN AND SHARP!
END
14

YOU'VE SEEN FAFHRD AND THE MOUSER DEFEAT THE *CLOUD OF HATE*... NOW LOOK AT A SOMEWHAT *SIMILAR* ADVENTURE THAT OCCURRED YEARS EARLIER TO...

YOUNG FAFHRD THE BARBARIAN

EVEN AS YOU AND I, FAFHRD WASN'T ALWAYS WHAT HE IS *NOW!* BUT *UNLIKE* MOST PEOPLE, HIS *YOUTH* WAS NEARLY AS EXCITING AND ADVENTURESOME AS HIS *MATURE* YEARS!

WITNESS *THIS* INCIDENT FROM HIS *FIFTEENTH YEAR!* ALREADY FULL GROWN AND POWERFULLY MUSCLED, HE WAS JUST *BEGINNING* TO FEEL THE LUST FOR *CHALLENGE* AND *DANGER* THAT MARKED HIS ADULTHOOD... *AND* HIS EYE ALREADY ITCHED FOR THE SIGHT OF LOVELY *WOMANHOOD!*

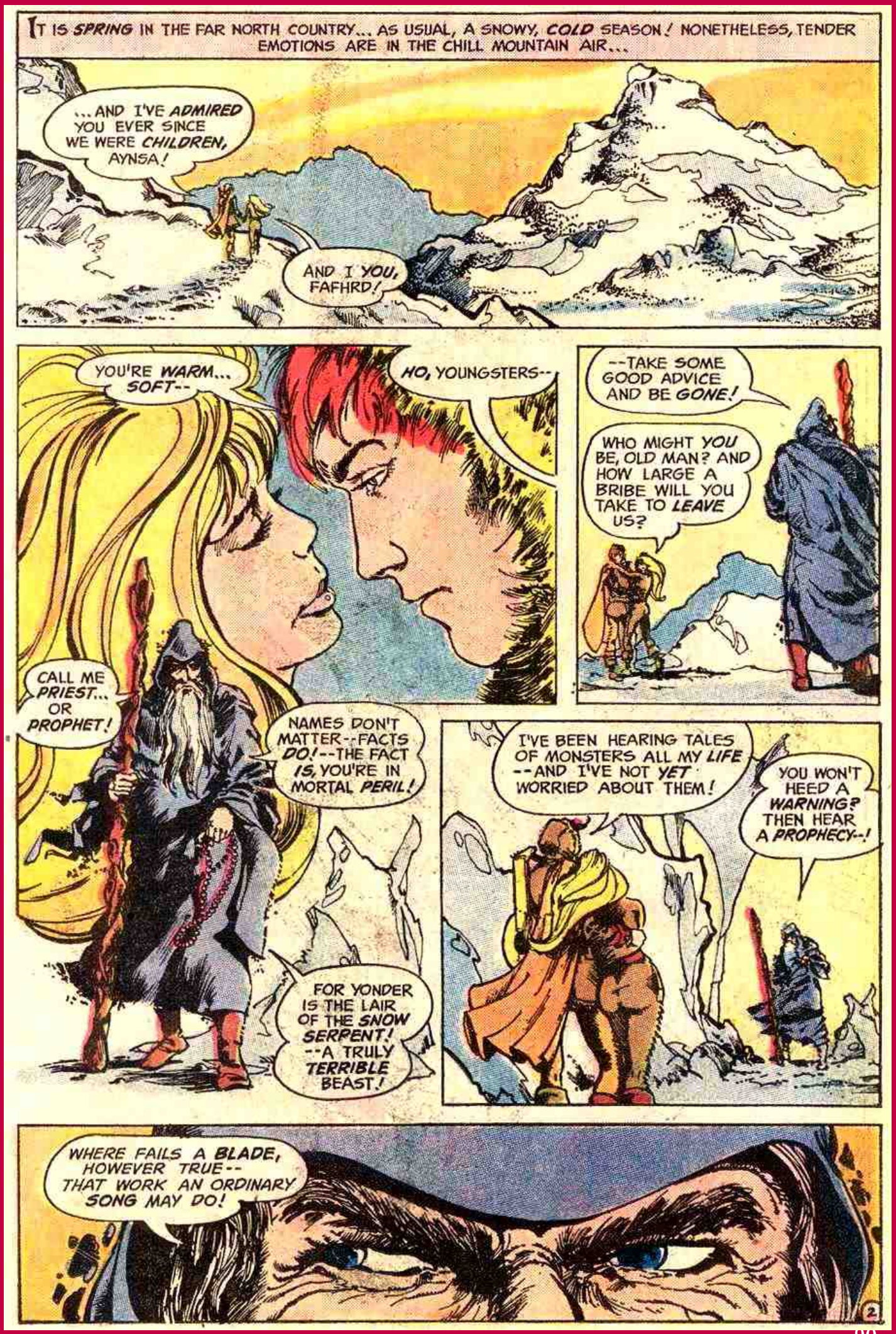
THUS, HE TOOK A *WALK* WITH A PRETTY GIRL, HOPING FOR A BIT OF *ROMANCE*... AND FOUND, INSTEAD--

"The PROPHECY!"

STORY BY DENNY O'NEIL
ART BY

Z-169

1


IT IS SPRING IN THE FAR NORTH COUNTRY... AS USUAL, A SNOWY, COLD SEASON! NONETHELESS, TENDER EMOTIONS ARE IN THE CHILL MOUNTAIN AIR...
...AND I'VE ADMIRED YOU EVER SINCE WE WERE CHILDREN, AYNSA!
AND I YOU, FAFHRD!
YOU'RE WARM... SOFT--
HO, YOUNGSTERS--
--TAKE SOME GOOD ADVICE AND BE GONE!
WHO MIGHT YOU BE, OLD MAN? AND HOW LARGE A BRIBE WILL YOU TAKE TO LEAVE US?
CALL ME PRIEST... OR PROPHET!
NAMES DON'T MATTER--FACTS DO!--THE FACT IS, YOU'RE IN MORTAL PERIL!
FOR YONDER IS THE LAIR OF THE SNOW SERPENT! --A TRULY TERRIBLE BEAST!
I'VE BEEN HEARING TALES OF MONSTERS ALL MY LIFE --AND I'VE NOT YET WORRIED ABOUT THEM!
YOU WON'T HEED A WARNING? THEN HEAR A PROPHECY--!
WHERE FAILS A BLADE, HOWEVER TRUE-- THAT WORK AN ORDINARY SONG MAY DO!
2

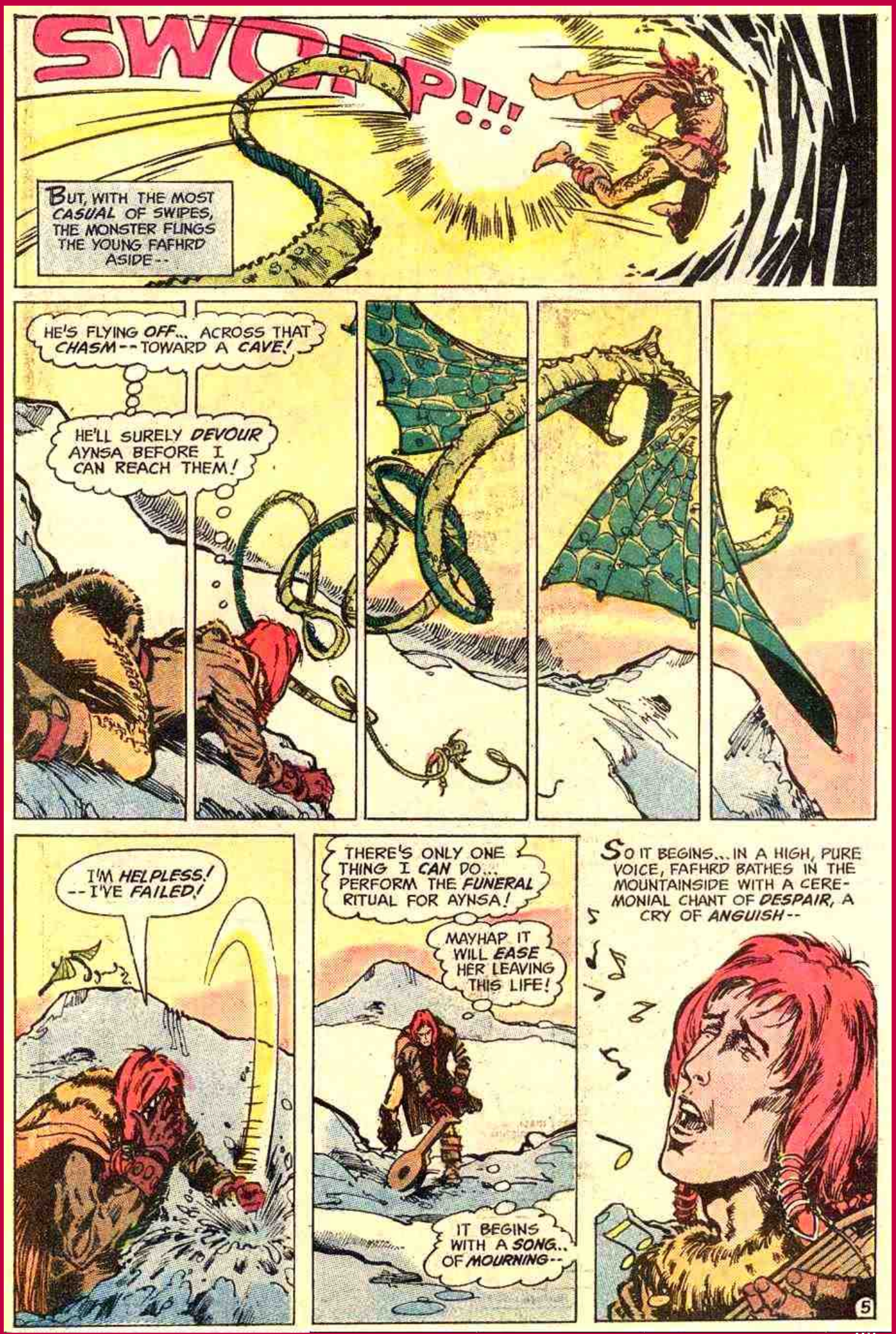
BAH! HE SPEAKS GIBBERISH! LET'S ABANDON THIS ANCIENT MUTTERER!
BUT HE DID GIVE ME ONE GOOD IDEA-- SONG! BEAUTY SUCH AS YOURS DESERVES MUSIC!
OH, FAFHRD...

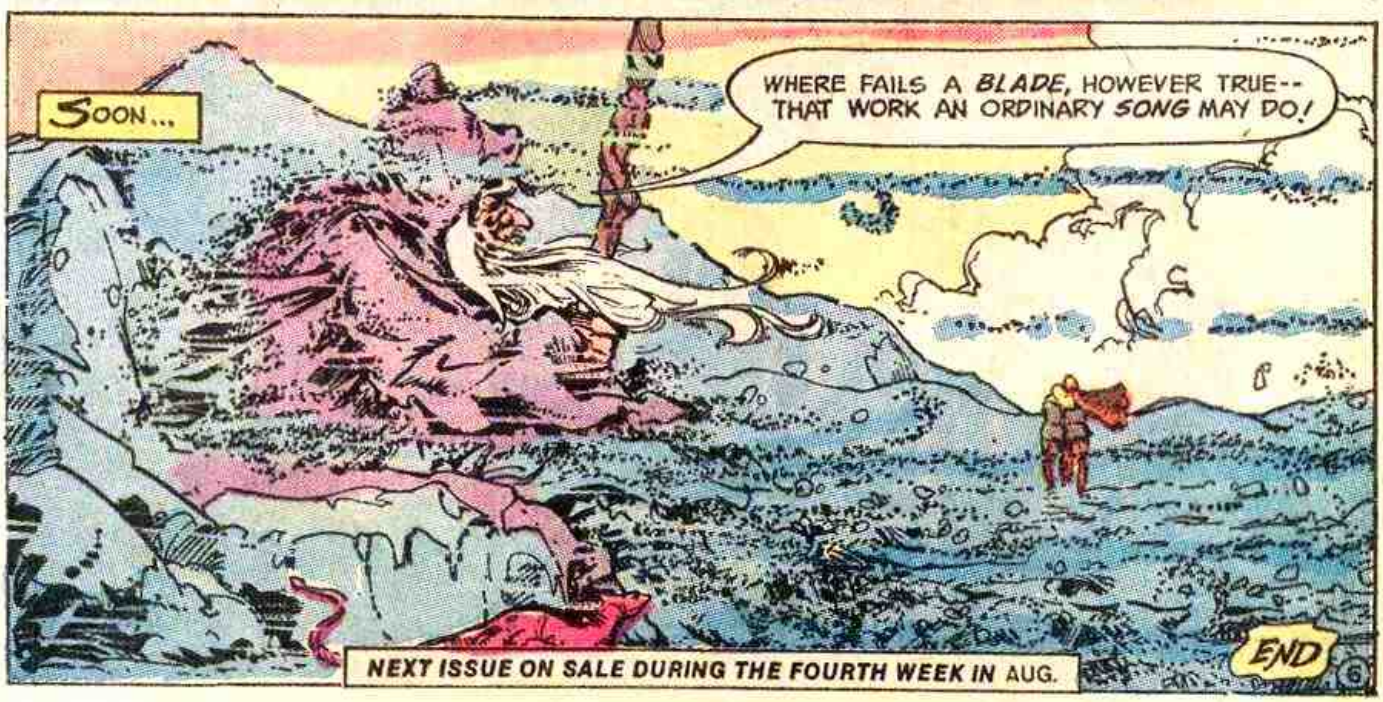
BROW LIKE MOONRISE! CHEEKS LIKE PEARL! WAS THERE EVER SUCH BEAUTY IN A GIRL?
YOUR VOICE... STIRS MY HEART, FAFHRD!

I DON'T COUNT THE DAY AS DAY WHENEVER MY AYNSA IS AWAY...
MMMMF
BEG PARDON, AYNSA--?

--AYNSA--!
3

DON'T FRET, SWEETEST! I'LL RESCUE YOU!
SO... MY BLOOMING MANHOOD IS PUT TO A TEST!
I'LL MAKE SHORT WORK OF THIS SICKENING CREATURE--
WHANG!
HIS SCALY HIDE IS LIKE ARMOR! MY STEEL DOESN'T DENT IT!
MAYHAP I'LL HAVE BETTER LUCK THRUSTING AT ITS FACE!
HOWEVER...
SLUNGH!
BY THE GREEN GODS! HE BIT THE SWORD IN HALF... AS THOUGH IT WERE A RADISH!
--LEAVING ME UNARMED... AND DEFEATED?
NO! NEVER DEFEATED!... NO WORTHY MAN EVER... SURRENDERS!
WITH MY BARE HANDS, I'LL SLAY MY FOE...OR BE SLAIN TRYING!
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.
4


SWOPP!!!
BUT, WITH THE MOST CASUAL OF SWIPES, THE MONSTER FLINGS THE YOUNG FAFHRD ASIDE--
HE'S FLYING OFF... ACROSS THAT CHASM--TOWARD A CAVE!
HE'LL SURELY DEVOUR AYNSA BEFORE I CAN REACH THEM!
I'M HELPLESS! --I'VE FAILED!
THERE'S ONLY ONE THING I CAN DO... PERFORM THE FUNERAL RITUAL FOR AYNSA!
MAYHAP IT WILL EASE HER LEAVING THIS LIFE!
IT BEGINS WITH A SONG.. OF MOURNING--
SO IT BEGINS... IN A HIGH, PURE VOICE, FAFHRD BATHES IN THE MOUNTAINSIDE WITH A CEREMONIAL CHANT OF DESPAIR, A CRY OF ANGUISH--
5



NEXT ISSUE ON SALE DURING THE FOURTH WEEK IN AUG.

ROGUES... HEROES... AND THE *GREATEST SWORDSMEN IN NEWHON*--

FAFHRD THE BARBARIAN & THE GRAY MOUSER

SWORD OF SORCERY, Vol. 1, No. 5, Nov.-Dec., 1973. Published bi-monthly by NATIONAL PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS, INC., 75 Rockefeller Plaza, N.Y., N.Y. 10019. Carmine Infantino, Publisher. Dennis O'Neil, Editor. Sol Harrison, Production Manager. Advertising Representative, Sanford Schwarz & Co., Inc., 16 West 46th Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. Copyright ©1973 by National Periodical Publications, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. No actual persons, living or dead, are intended or should be inferred. Printed in U.S.A.

SUBSCRIPTION DEPT.: P.O. Box 1047, Flushing, N.Y. 11352. Rates for fifteen 20c issues $3.00 in U.S. and Possessions; $4.00 elsewhere.

This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition, nor affixed to, nor as part of any advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever.

I'M HUNGRY! AND YOU'RE PLAYING WITH MY LUNCH!
THEN SHOOT YOUR SILLY ARROW!
LAUGHING, THEY HAUL THE CARCASS ABOARD THEIR SLOOP, AND...
PREPARE THE MEAT FOR THE STOVE, FAF! I'VE AN ARCANE RECIPE FOR SQUID I'M ACHING TO TRY!
AND HURRY! MY STOMACH IS SO EMPTY--
--THE POOR THING THINKS MY THROAT IS CUT!
FOR PERPETRATING SUCH AN ANCIENT JEST--IT SHOULD BE!
BY THE GODS, I WAS BORN WITH LUCK AS A TWIN! I CATCH A FISH IN THE MIDDLE OF THE OCEAN, RIP OPEN THE BELLY AND--
--LOOK, LITTLE MAN, WHAT I FIND!
A RING... WITH AN EMERALD KEY AS DECORATION! WHOSE DOOR DO YOU THINK IT UNLOCKS?
A KING'S LADY'S I'D GUESS!
FAF... RID YOURSELF OF THE TRINKET! I RECOGNIZE THOSE SYMBOLS... 'TIS A RELIC OF SIMORGYA... THE SUNKEN LAND...!
2

LEGENDS SAY SIMORGYA WAS PEOPLED WITH MIGHTY MAGICIANS... EVIL BEINGS CLAIMING POWER OVER WIND AND WAVES--
--YET THE SEA GULPED THEM FOR ALL THAT!

I TELL YOU, THE BAUBLE BODES BAD FOR US!
NONSENSE! YOU'RE GROWING SUPERSTITIOUS, MOUSER! NO ILL CAN COME FROM HANDSOME BITS OF GOLD AND GEMWORK!

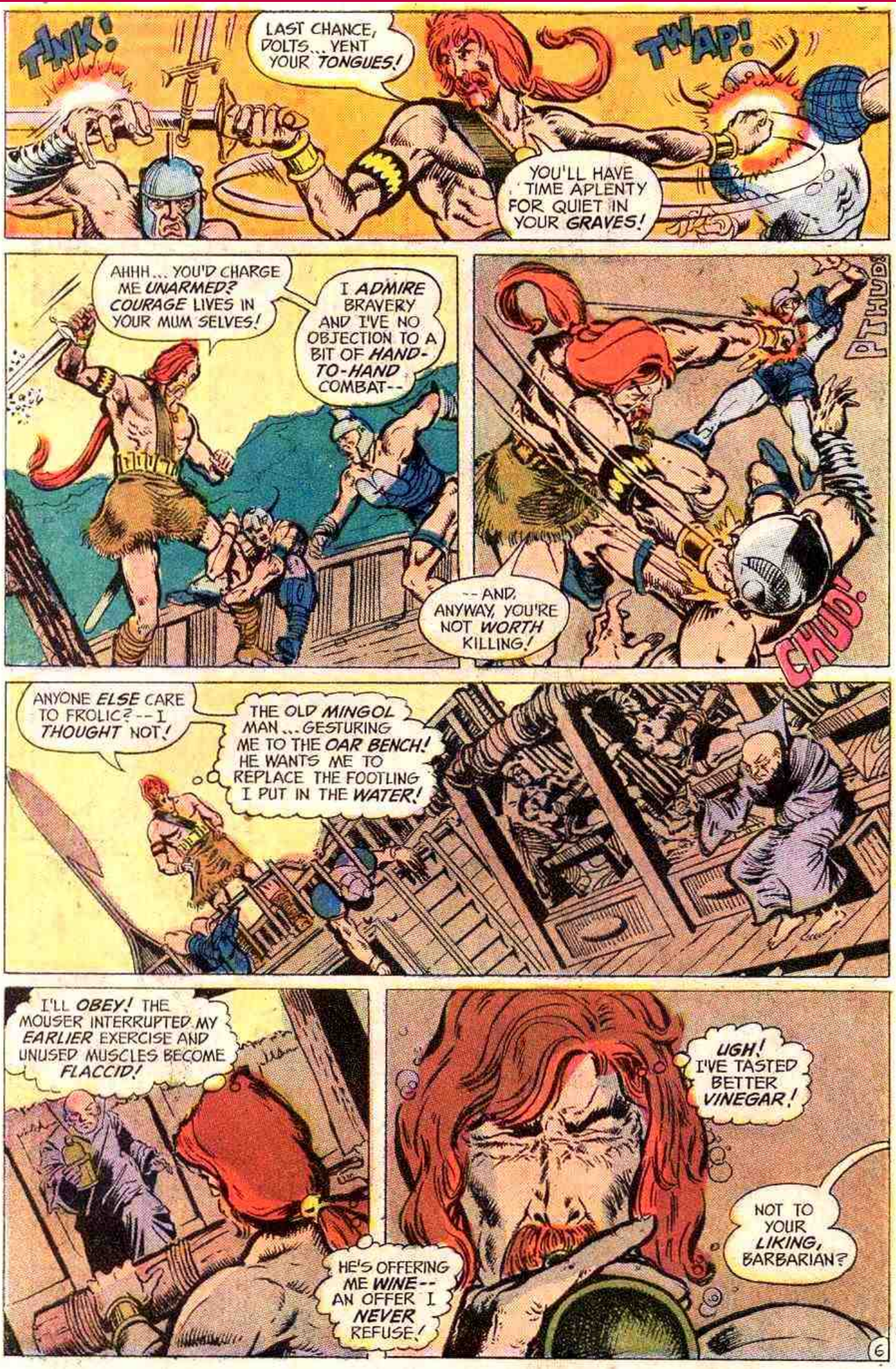
SUDDENLY, AS IF IN ANSWER TO THE BARBARIAN, THE SKY DARKENS... THE WATER ROILS ANGRILY--

--AND THE TINY SLOOP NEARLY CAPSIZES!
THROW THE RING AWAY... LEST IT BLOWS UP A HURRICANE!
I SAY AGAIN--

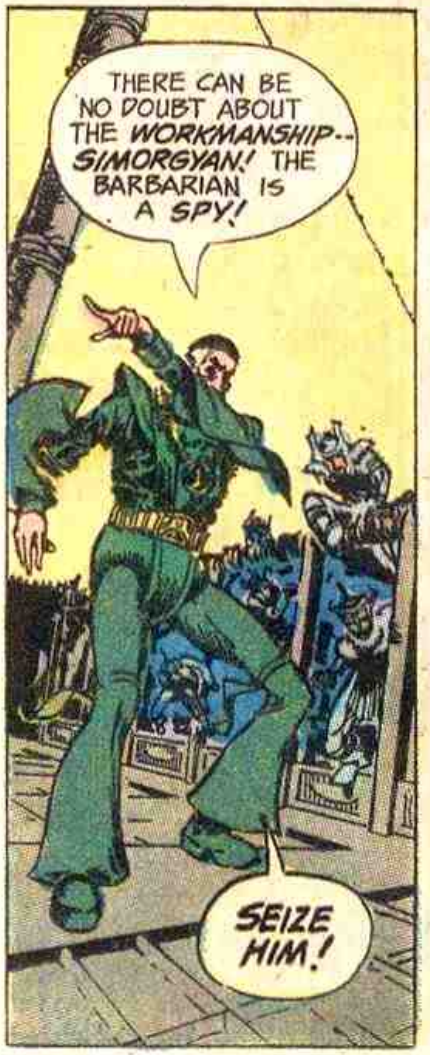
--NONSEN---
GLUGLE--
3

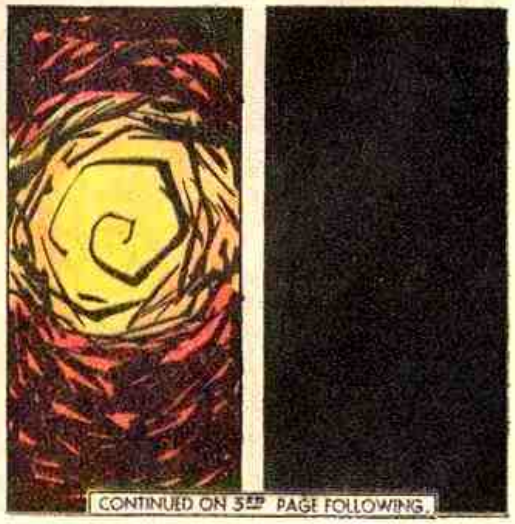
WHEN FAFHRD SURFACES, HE CAN SEE NO TRACE OF EITHER VESSEL OR FRIEND! AND HE THINKS...
THE STORM IS HEAVY AND IMPENETRABLE AS A VELVET CURTAIN! WORSE, I'VE LOST MY SENSE OF DIRECTION--!
--NOTHING TO DO EXCEPT SWIM AND-- PRAY!
COULD MY PRAYERS BE ANSWERED ALREADY? OR DON'T I SEE A SHIP'S SHAPE YONDER?!
ODD... I FEEL I'VE BEEN IN THIS SITUATION BEFORE!*
*NOTE: HE HAS--IN S OF S #3. -Denny.
KRAKK!
YIIII!
AHOY! HERE'S A WELL-WETTED TRAVELER SEEKING SHELTER!
HOW KIND... THEY'RE EXTENDING AN OAR TO HELP ME ABOARD!
NASTY GESTURE, OARSMAN! YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED!
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.
4

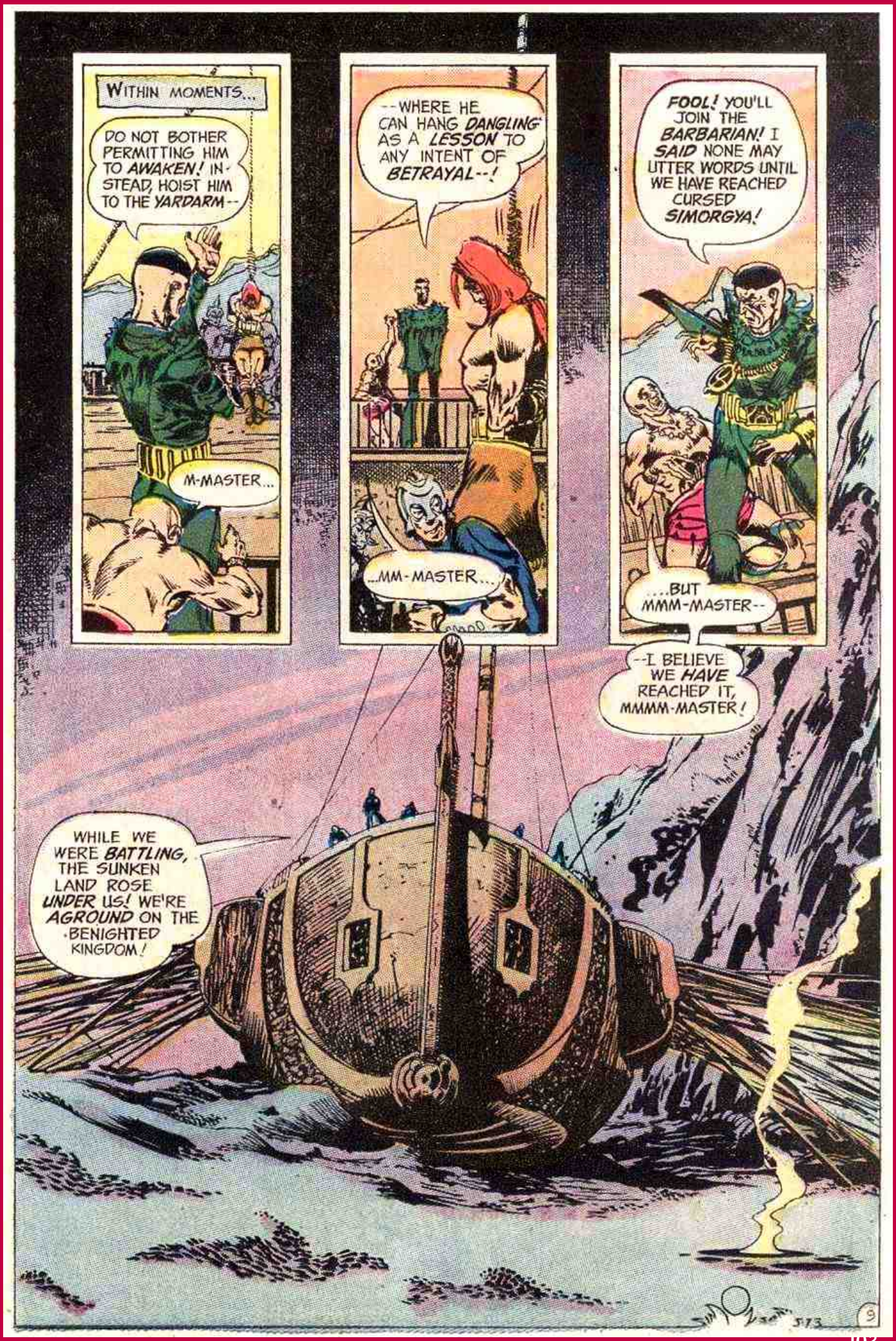
BUT SINCE SHAME IS UNLIKELY... BE ASLEEP INSTEAD!
THOD!
I'LL TEACH YOU HOSPITALITY... AT THE POINT OF MY BLADE!
SPEAK, FOEMEN-- OR DIE SILENT!
YOU'VE MADE YOUR CHOICE, EH? YOU'D BE SO FOOLISH AS TO LET STEEL DO YOUR TALKING!
JUDGING FROM YOUR SKILL, I'D SAY YOU LEARNED SWORDPLAY FROM AN OLD WOMAN WHOSE WEAPONS WERE KNITTING NEEDLES!
YOU CHOOSE NOT TO REPLY TO MY CLEVER REMARK--?
NO MATTER...TO ANSWER ME WOULD REQUIRE WIT-- A COMMODITY OF WHICH YOU HAVE NONE!
I CONFESS... YOUR SEALED LIPS BOTHER ME MORE THAN YOUR ATTACK!
I'M USED TO CONVERSATION WHILE I WREAK DESTRUCTION!


TINK!
LAST CHANCE, DOLTS... VENT YOUR TONGUES!
TWAP!
YOU'LL HAVE TIME APLENTY FOR QUIET IN YOUR GRAVES!
AHHH... YOU'D CHARGE ME UNARMED? COURAGE LIVES IN YOUR MUM SELVES!
I ADMIRE BRAVERY AND I'VE NO OBJECTION TO A BIT OF HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT--
PLUNG!
--AND, ANYWAY, YOU'RE NOT WORTH KILLING!
CHUD!
ANYONE ELSE CARE TO FROLIC? --I THOUGHT NOT!
THE OLD MINGOL MAN... GESTURING ME TO THE OAR BENCH! HE WANTS ME TO REPLACE THE FOOTLING I PUT IN THE WATER!
I'LL OBEY! THE MOUSER INTERRUPTED MY EARLIER EXERCISE AND UNUSED MUSCLES BECOME FLACCID!
HE'S OFFERING ME WINE-- AN OFFER I NEVER REFUSE!
UGH! I'VE TASTED BETTER VINEGAR!
NOT TO YOUR LIKING, BARBARIAN?
6

YOU'LL FIND MORE TO YOUR DISMAY ABOARD THIS SHIP OF LAVAS LAERK! FOR WE'RE ON A PERIL-RIDDEN QUEST!
--OR THAT THERE NEVER WAS SUCH A PLACE! BUT LAVAS LAERK SWORE A GREAT OATH BEFORE HIS MOTHER!
LAVAS LAERK HAS SWORN TO RAID FAR SIMORGYA! OH, I KNOW THEY SAY SIMORGYA IS UNDER THE WAVES--
--WHOM HE HATES WORSE THAN HE HATES HIS FRIENDS.
SO IT'S SIMORGYA WE SEEK, IF ONLY TO STEAL PEARLS FROM OYSTERS AND RAVISH FISHES!
LAVAS LAERK HAS PUT A VOW OF SILENCE UPON HIMSELF AND HIS MEN UNTIL WE SIGHT THE COAST...
GHAAH!
7



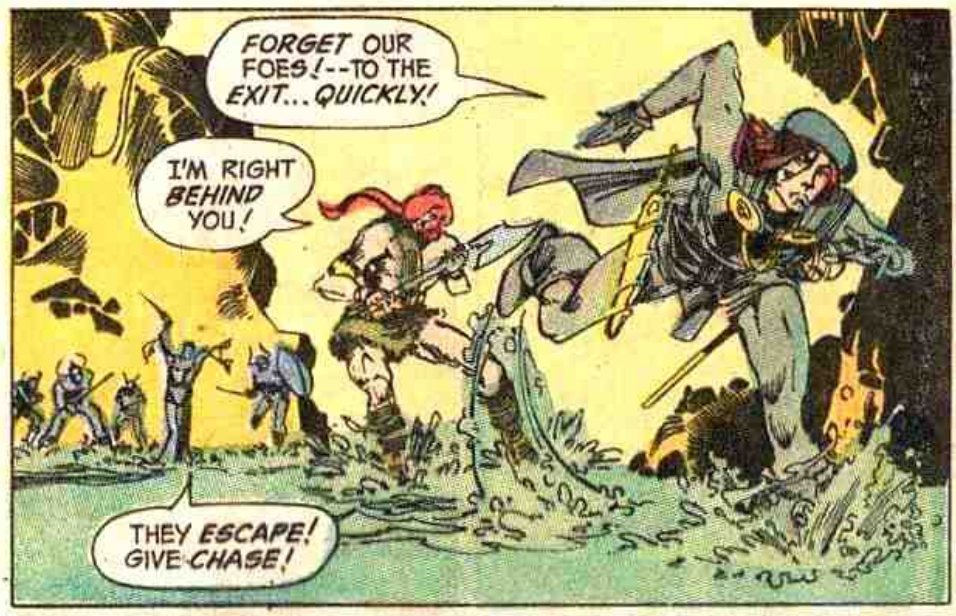

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.


WITHIN MOMENTS...
DO NOT BOTHER PERMITTING HIM TO AWAKEN! INSTEAD, HOIST HIM TO THE YARDARM--
M-MASTER...
--WHERE HE CAN HANG DANGLING AS A LESSON TO ANY INTENT OF BETRAYAL--!
...MM-MASTER...
FOOL! YOU'LL JOIN THE BARBARIAN! I SAID NONE MAY UTTER WORDS UNTIL WE HAVE REACHED CURSED SIMORGYA!
...BUT MMM-MASTER--
--I BELIEVE WE HAVE REACHED IT, MMMM-MASTER!
WHILE WE WERE BATTLING, THE SUNKEN LAND ROSE UNDER US! WE'RE AGROUND ON THE BENIGHTED KINGDOM!
9

BELAY STRANGLING THE BARBARIAN! BRING HIM ALONG... HE MAY GUIDE US TO THE LOOT!
COME WITH ME--TO RICHES!
WINE AND LEADERSHIP HAVING DULLED THEIR FEARS, THE MEN TRAIL LAVAS LAERK OVER SLIMY SOIL, PUSHING THE DAZED FAFHRD...
...UNTIL...
WE HAVE ARRIVED! BEYOND THE DOOR LIES THE SIMORGYAN TREASURE!
GIVE ME THE BARBARIAN'S RING!
AS YOU COMMAND, MMMMM-MASTER!
I WARRANT THE JEWELED KEY ON IT UNLOCKS THE CHAMBER OF WEALTH!
KLIK!
AHHHH... I REASONED CORRECTLY!
10

ANXIOUSLY, THEY STEP INSIDE AND GASP! LAVAS LAERK'S VOICE RINGS--
O SIMORGYA! WE HAVE FOUND YOUR TREASURE HOUSE! MY VOW IS MADE GOOD!
WHERE ARE YOUR GUARDS? WHERE ARE YOUR SOLDIERS?
M-M-M-MMM-MASTER! THE LIGHT... IT GLOWS FROM EVERYWHERE-- AND NOWHERE!
DO NOT BOTHER ME WITH TRIFLES!
UMMMM... I SUPPOSE I CAN STOP PLAYING AT BEING UNCONSCIOUS-- AS THOUGH THEIR LOVE-TAPS COULD DO MORE THAN STUN ME--! I'LL BREAK FREE AND...
HSSSS-T! FAF!
MOUSER...?
AYE! I SAW THE SHIP THAT YOU SWAM TO AND FOLLOWED HER! ONLY NOW WAS I ABLE TO CATCH UP!
IN A SECOND, I'LL HAVE YOUR BONDS SEVERED!
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.

GRAB A WEAPON AND LET'S FLEE THIS DANK PILE OF ROCKS! I FEEL EVIL SEEPING INTO MY BONES!
HA! 'TIS YOUR OVERACTIVE IMAGINATION--!
THE SPY IS LOOSE!
WE HAVE REAL DANGER TO CONTEND WITH ...LAERK AND HIS DULLARDS!
I SWEAR...
...I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND...
...WHY WE END EACH ADVENTURE...
...CLASHING WITH THUGS!
DON'T COMPLAIN, SMALL NAGGER! WOULD YOU RATHER BE BORED?
FRANKLY, BOREDOM MIGHT BE A WELCOME CHANGE!
FAF... HAVE YOU NOTICED A CERTAIN DAMPNESS--?
INDEED! MY SHINS ARE QUITE WET--
--THE WATER IS WITHOUT DOUBT RISING!
TRUE!--AND SOMETHING TELLS ME THE TIME IS SHORT!
12



FROM THE MURK, SHADOWY SHAPES ARISE TO ENVELOP LAVAS LAERK AND HIS HENCHMEN... SHAPES LIKE GIANT HUMANS WEARING CLOAKS--

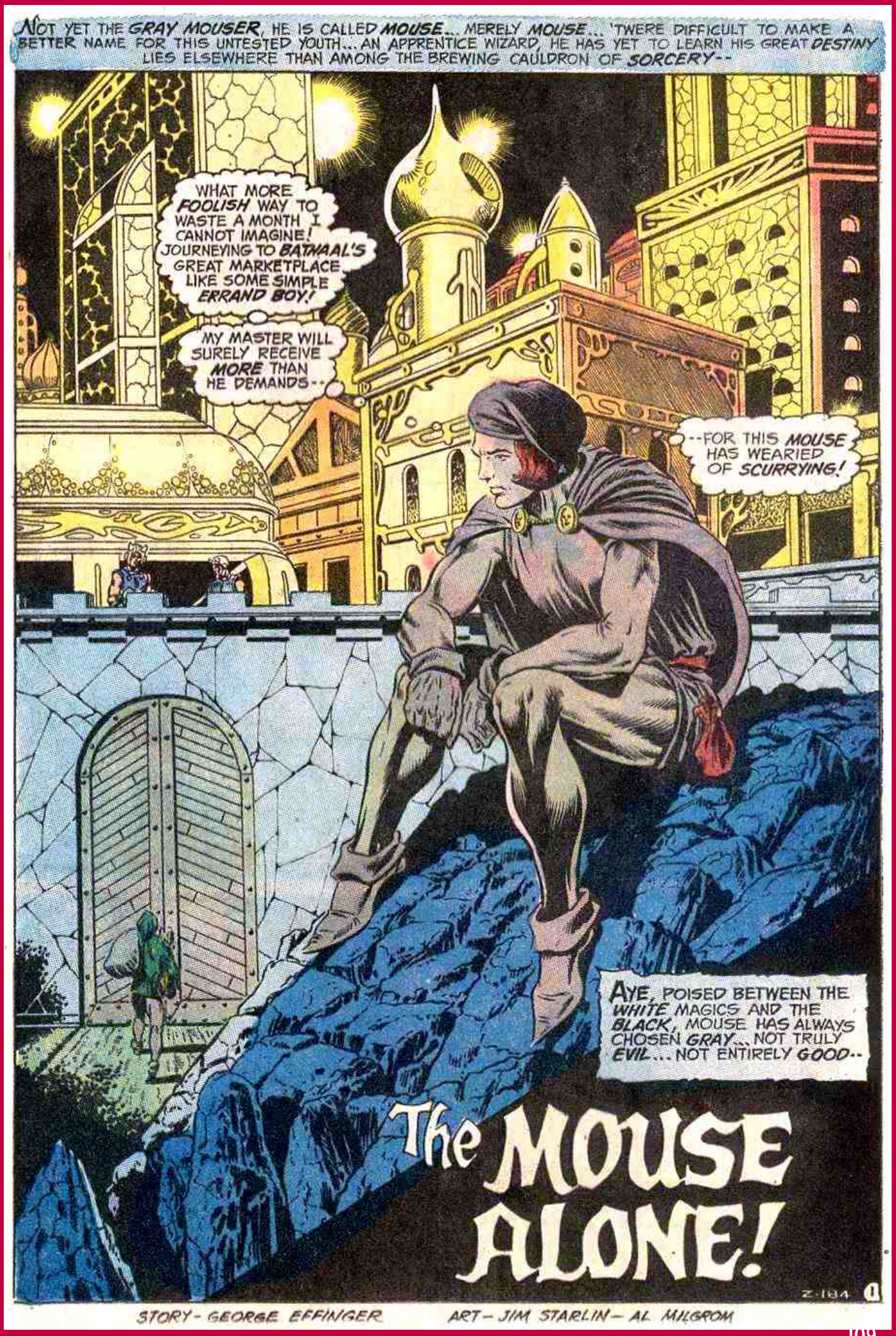
--EXCEPT THAT THESE ARE NOT WEARING CLOAKS... NOR ARE THEY HUMAN...

LAERK'S SCREAM ECHOES...

THEY GRIP ME! THEY CLUTCH ME!

I'LL LEAVE THE GOLD AND GEMS! ONLY... RELEASE ME--I BEG!

EVEN AS THE SUNKEN LAND VANISHES INTO THE SEA, FAFHRD AND THE MOUSER ARE STROKING TOWARD THEIR CRAFT...
A BIZARRE EXPLOIT, MOUSER! LAERK GOT WHAT HE WAS DESTINED TO GET--A DESERVED DOOM!
WHILE I ACQUIRED A HANDSOME BATTLE AXE!
PITCH IT AWAY, FAF! REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED WHEN LAST YOU TOOK A THING FROM SIMORGYA!
THERE IS WISDOM IN YOUR SUGGESTION, MOUSER!
SIMORGYA... IT IS GONE AGAIN! AND MAY IT SOAK THERE FOREVER AND ROT IN ITS OWN CORRUPTION...
...TILL ALL'S MUCK!
ALONG THE RIM OF THE EAST A RUDDY SMUDGE BEGINS TO SHOW...
14
END


NOT YET THE GRAY MOUSER, HE IS CALLED MOUSE... MERELY MOUSE... 'TWERE DIFFICULT TO MAKE A BETTER NAME FOR THIS UNTESTED YOUTH... AN APPRENTICE WIZARD, HE HAS YET TO LEARN HIS GREAT DESTINY LIES ELSEWHERE THAN AMONG THE BREWING CAULDRON OF SORCERY--
WHAT MORE FOOLISH WAY TO WASTE A MONTH I CANNOT IMAGINE! JOURNEYING TO BATHAAL'S GREAT MARKETPLACE LIKE SOME SIMPLE ERRAND BOY!
MY MASTER WILL SURELY RECEIVE MORE THAN HE DEMANDS--
--FOR THIS MOUSE HAS WEARIED OF SCURRYING!
AYE, POISED BETWEEN THE WHITE MAGICS AND THE BLACK, MOUSE HAS ALWAYS CHOSEN GRAY... NOT TRULY EVIL... NOT ENTIRELY GOOD--
The MOUSE ALONE!
Z-184
1
STORY - GEORGE EFFINGER
ART - JIM STARLIN - AL MILGROM

MY DOUBLE FORTNIGHT'S MARCH DESERVES SOME REWARD, I THINK...
FOR TOMORROW I MUST BEGIN THE LONG WALK HOME!

SPEAK, STRIPLING! STATE YOUR BUSINESS OR FACE OUR SWORDS!
MOCK ME NOT, SIMPLETON! I HAVE JOURNEYED FAR TO SEE YOUR KING!

THEN, WITHIN THE CITY...
OLD GLAVAS RHO WAS WISE IN WARNING ME OF THESE WONDERS!
INDEED THEY CRY OUT FOR EXPLORATION!

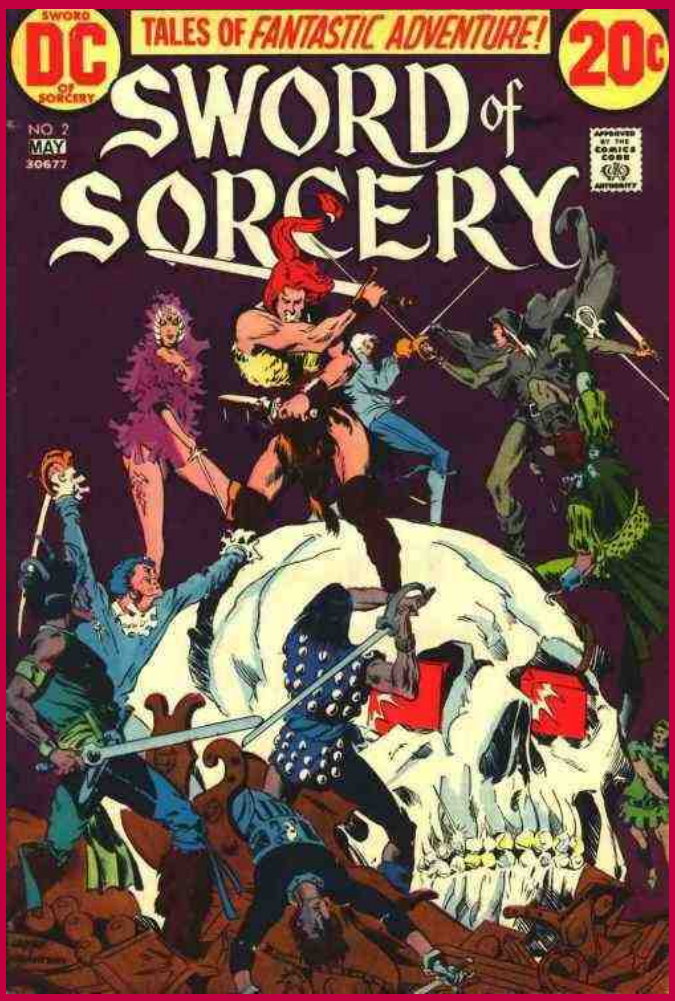
I'VE COME A GREAT DISTANCE TO SEE YOUR KING!
HE IS THERE, IN THE PALACE OF NOON...
...BUT WHETHER HE WILL SEE YOU, THAT IS IN DOUBT.
2

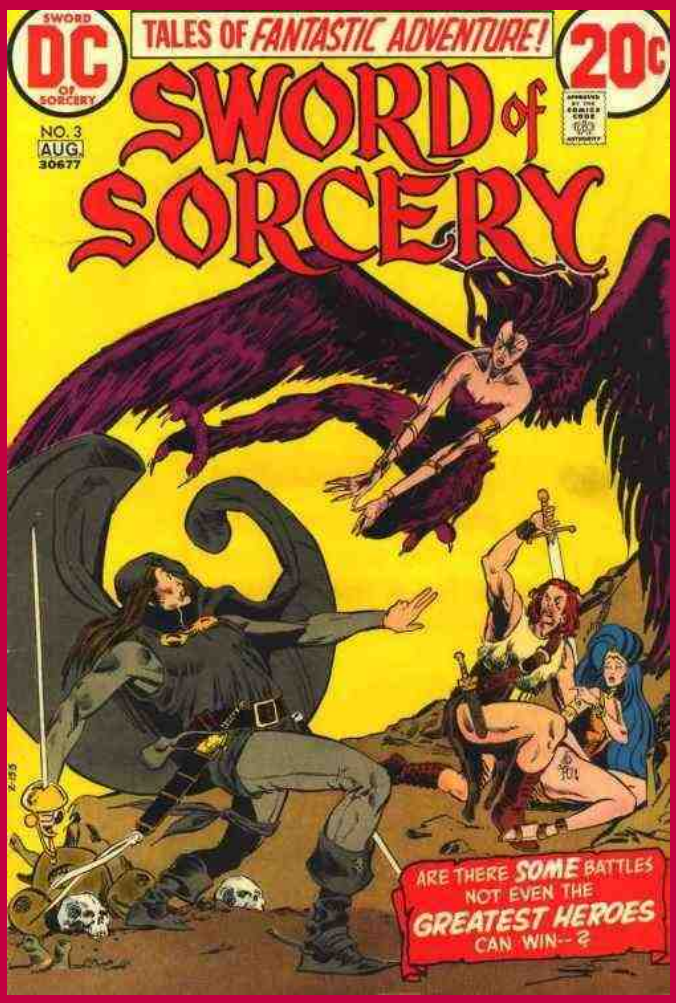
BUT ONCE INSIDE THE PALACE, MOUSE'S SMALLNESS AND ARROGANT MANNER AMUSE BATHAAL'S JADED RULER--
I HAVE COME TO OFFER MY SERVICE, NOBLE KING!
AH, BUT WHAT SERVICE HAVE YOU, YOUNGSTER?
GIVE ME A SWORD, AND A WARRIOR TO FIGHT, AND YOU'LL LEARN SOON ENOUGH!
FETCH HIM A BLADE!
AS YOU WISH!
YOU HAVE THE ARM OF A BEATER OF RUGS, LITTLE ONE!
I REALLY MUST LEARN TO HOLD MY TONGUE...
... IF I SURVIVE THIS LESSON!
ENOUGH! INDEED, I GROW BORED!
TAKE THE YOUTH AWAY AND FEED HIM.
YOU WILL REGRET THIS SOMEDAY, MY KING!
3

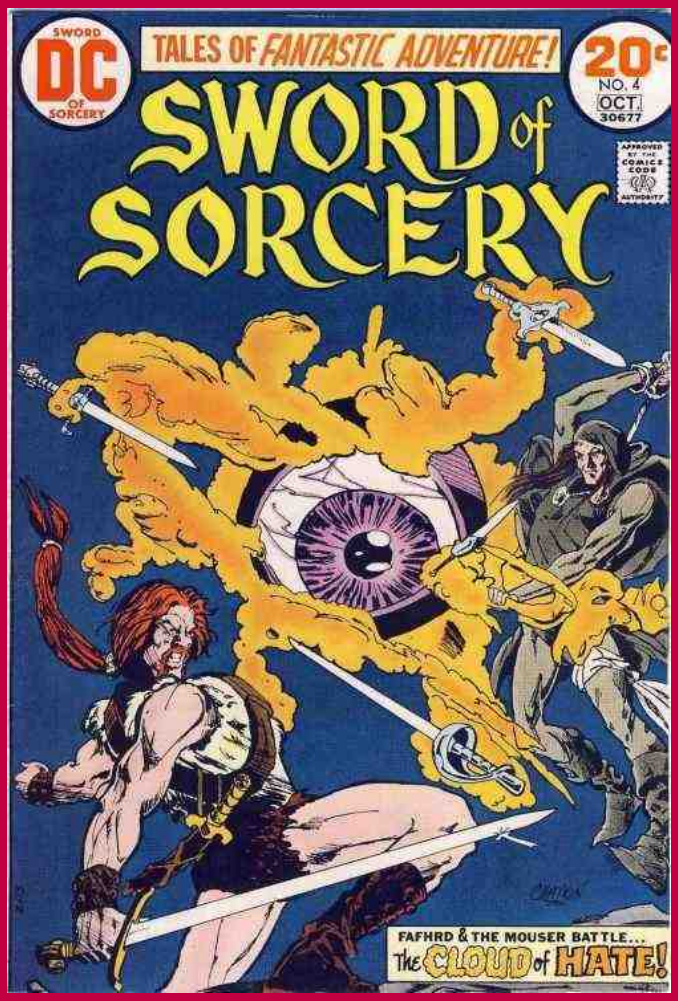
FOR MOUSE, THERE IS STILL THE MATTER OF HIS MASTER'S ERRAND... THE BOY IS ALONE IN BATHAAL... ALONE, BUT FOR SHENDAI THE DEFT...
WOULD THAT I WERE NOT CALLED "THE DEFT," SMALL FRIEND!
AGILITY MUST FADE AS I GROW OLD... I WISH I WERE SHENDAI THE WISE, INSTEAD.
IN WHAT WAY DO YOU PRACTICE DEFTNESS?
ARE YOU THEN A CUTPURSE?
OBSERVE, UNTUTORED ONE--!
THESE ARE MY COMPANIONS...
...THEY FLY WHERE I POINT!
SINISTER...
...AND DEXTER! --MY TWIN BLADES!
YOU MUST LEARN YOUR OWN TALENTS, MOUSE!
IT'S CLEAR I'M NOT A BRUTE OF A WARRIOR!
PERHAPS YOU WILL NEVER DUPLICATE MY FEAT...
...SO NOW WE MUST FIND YOUR OWN!
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.
4

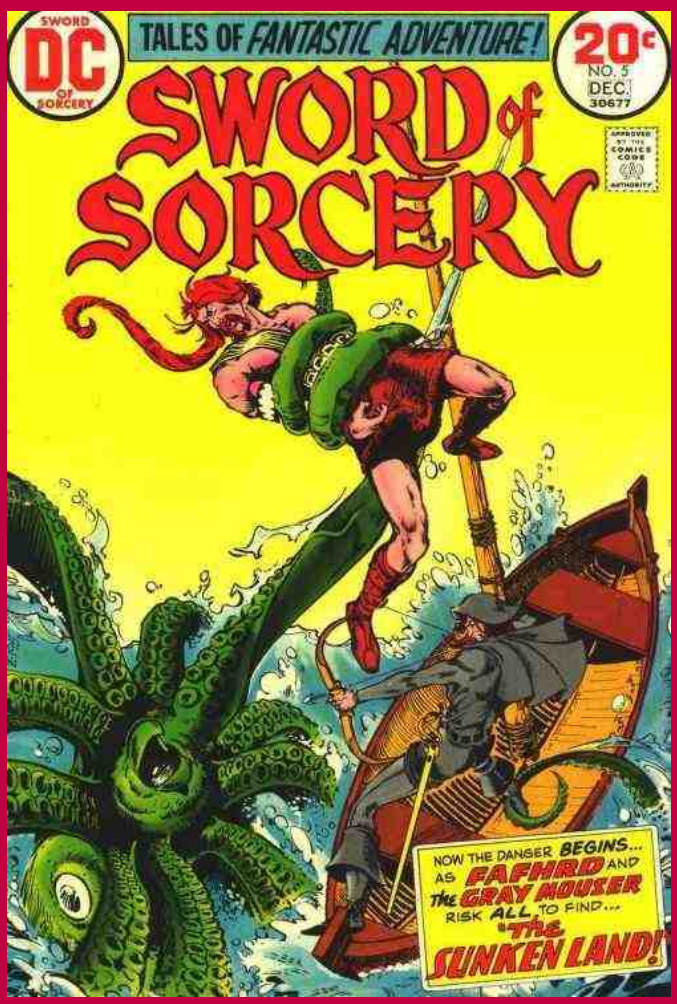
MY DREAM OF GLORY FADED MORE SPEEDILY THAN USUAL!
THEN COME, FULFILL YOUR MISSION AND RETURN HOME.
SUDDENLY THE PAIR ARE ATTACKED BY MURDEROUS CUTTHROATS, AND...
HA!
AYAAAAA
BE STILL, BOY!
DON'T ACT SO SURPRISED!
WE MUST COMPARE SURPRISES ANOTHER TIME!
UNNH!
5

YOU WILL PAY, EASTERNER, FOR MY COMRADE'S LIFE.
I HASTEN TO PURCHASE MY LIBERTY--
--AND THAT OF MY COMPANION!
WHAT UNHOLY POWER HAVE YOU?
NOTHING STRANGE, LAD! MERELY A CONCEALED DAGGER!
BUT I WOULD HAVE FOUND A BROADSWORD A HINDRANCE!
YOU SAVED MY MASTER'S GOLD!
I CAN GIVE YOU NO GREATER GIFT THAN THIS ADVICE--
--VALUE YOUR SKILL, SUBTLETY, AND MISDIRECTION ABOVE ALL ELSE!
THESE THREE THINGS WILL PROTECT YOU, IN WHATEVER YOU DO!
WAIT! I WOULD REWARD YOU! UH!?
MY MASTER'S PURSE! COME BACK, YOU SILKEN THIEF!
AYE, IT WAS A GOOD LESSON...
...THOUGH A COSTLY ONE!
MOUSE... SOON THE MOUSER... HAS LEARNED MORE THAN HE REALIZES... BUT IT WILL TAKE TIME FOR HIM TO DISCOVER THAT!
THE END
6


SWORD DC OF SORCERY
TALES OF FANTASTIC ADVENTURE!
20c
SWORD of SORCERY
NO. 2
MAY
30677
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY


SWORD DC OF SORCERY
TALES OF FANTASTIC ADVENTURE!
20c
SWORD of SORCERY
NO. 3
AUG.
30677
ARE THERE SOME BATTLES NOT EVEN THE GREATEST HEROES CAN WIN--?


SWORD DC OF SORCERY
TALES OF FANTASTIC ADVENTURE!
20c
NO. 4
OCT.
30677
SWORD of SORCERY
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
FAFHRD & THE MOUSER BATTLE...
The CLOUD of HATE!


SWORD DC OF SORCERY
TALES OF FANTASTIC ADVENTURE!
20c
NO. 5
DEC.
30677
SWORD of SORCERY
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
NOW THE DANGER BEGINS... AS FAFHRD AND THE GRAY MOUSER RISK ALL TO FIND... "THE SUNKEN LAND!"